

EXPLORING SAUDI TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF STORYTIME
ON CHILDREN'S EMOTION REGULATION

by

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Dedication

To my husband, my children, and everyone who supported me throughout my doctoral
journey,
Thank you for your love, patience, encouragement, and belief in me.
This achievement is dedicated to you with heartfelt gratitude.

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Reem Assiri

ABSTRACT

EXPLORING SAUDI TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF STORYTIME ON CHILDREN'S EMOTION REGULATION

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Adviser: Julie Ricks-Doneen, Ph.D.

This study examined early childhood teachers' perceptions of how storytime is used to support children's emotion regulation in the Asir region of Saudi Arabia. Data were collected through a pre-survey and semi-structured interviews with seven teachers with varied levels of teaching experience. Data were then analyzed using grounded theory methods including emotional coding of the stories they reported using in their classrooms. Findings revealed that storytime served as a deliberate instructional tool for guiding emotional learning. Teachers used stories to help children label emotions, recognize emotional cues, reflect on behavior, practice self-control, and develop empathy toward peers. Analysis of the emotionally coded stories showed consistent emotional progressions such as fear to safety, anger to empathy, and sadness to support, which aligned with teachers' instructional goals. Despite curriculum pacing constraints, limited time, and technology interruptions, teachers adapted stories and modified pacing to address emotional needs in real time. Based on my interpretation of the data, I developed the Scaffolded Emotional-Moral Experience Model, explains how teachers' structure

storytime to scaffold emotional understanding and moral reasoning within Saudi early childhood classrooms.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences
CASEL	Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECLKC	Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center
GSRP	Great Start Readiness Program
IRB	Institutional Review Board
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The quality of a child's early experiences makes a critical difference, establishing either strong or weak foundations for health, learning, and behavior throughout the rest of their life (United Nations International Children's Education Fund [UNICEF], 2023). During this period, the brain has remarkable adaptability and impressive development at this stage (Allen & Kelly, 2015). According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2020), early experiences impact brain development, laying the groundwork for all future learning, behavior, and health. Children's serve-and-return interactions with their parents, that is, back-and-forth exchanges of attention, sounds, or gestures between a child and parents and other caregivers, are key to this developmental process.

Children's emotion regulation is the capacity to manage feelings, identify emotions, and discover what triggers those feelings to help children to express emotions in a socially appropriate way. The development of emotion regulation is a developmentally extended process. Infancy and early childhood establish the foundation for lifelong emotion regulation capacities (Thompson et al., 2008a).

Understanding how children regulate their emotions is crucial for promoting their socio-emotional development and well-being. Emotion regulation is how individuals modulate and manage their emotional responses to different situations (Gross, 2015). During my work with children, I have noted a variation in their ability to regulate emotions based on age. While some children effortlessly regain composure and resume

their activities after experiencing strong emotions, others encounter challenges in managing and recovering from emotional episodes. For example, preschool children cry longer than kindergarten children when they face a frustrating situation before they find a way to calm themselves down. However, there are individual differences even within the same age group. Practical emotion regulation skills enable children to cope with stress, maintain positive relationships, and engage in adaptive behaviors (Elias et al., 1997).

Early social emotional skills are essential to school readiness and healthy child development (Michigan Department of Education, 2021). While all young children experience behavioral and emotional challenges, many can adapt and resolve them with support. However, those who are unable to do so face a 50% chance of continuing to experience these problems into adulthood (Bierman et al., 2016). According to the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) Implementation Manual Michigan's state funded prekindergarten program for four-year-old children social emotional learning (SEL) is crucial for helping children manage their feelings and interact successfully with others (Michigan Department of Education, 2021).

In the field of education, where encouraging social and emotional growth is a priority, teachers use a wide range of strategies to model, teach, and support students' social-emotional development. Storytime stands apart as a valued tool to use in early childhood classes. Storytime provides a medium where children can express their feelings, thoughts, and interactions by building an understanding and creating a correlation with the content of the stories. According to Yahya et al. (2018), teachers acknowledge that Storytelling fosters social-emotional development among children through encouraging discussions and interactions during and after storytime. Stories are

the oldest form of teaching. Storytelling has been significant in bonding early human societies and providing answers to children on questions based on life lessons (Fog et al., 2005). According to Isik (2016), stories enhance children's cognitive, social, emotional, literacy, and language development. Storytime exists in diverse media, such as reading books, songs, fables, cultural stories, Storytelling through puppets and other characters, picture books, and Storytelling using personal experiences (Isbell et al., 2004)

Understanding teachers' perceptions regarding the role of storytime in children's emotional regulation is essential for several reasons. Teachers play a critical role in implementing storytime activities and creating supportive classroom environments, and their beliefs and perceptions influence how social-emotional learning practices are enacted in daily instruction. Teachers' insights into the connection between storytelling and emotional regulation can therefore inform effective instructional practices. In addition, exploring teachers' perspectives can reveal challenges or barriers they encounter when incorporating storytelling to support children's emotional regulation. Identifying these challenges provides valuable guidance for professional development programs and helps inform teacher training initiatives aimed at strengthening social-emotional learning practices (Ferreira et al., 2021).

Third, effective emotional regulation fosters social competence, enabling children to interact positively with their peers and adults, and supports mental health by providing coping strategies for stress and anxiety. Fourth, through storytelling, teachers can facilitate cultural understanding and inclusion, further enriching the classroom environment. Lastly, nurturing emotional regulation from an early age prepares children for future challenges, enhancing their resilience and ability to navigate complex

emotional landscapes. Understanding and addressing teachers' experiences and challenges in using storytelling for emotional regulation can lead to more nuanced and effective educational strategies, ultimately benefiting children's development and learning.

Overall, recognizing the crucial role of early experiences and emotion regulation in children's socio-emotional development, this paper aims to investigate teachers' perceptions of the role of storytime in encouraging children's emotion regulation skills, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and future success in school and adult life.

Rationale for Focusing on Saudi Teachers' Perceptions

The early years of a child's life are critical in establishing a foundation for cognitive, emotional, and social development. The necessity of this study is particularly pressing in the context of Saudi Arabia, where a high prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) including emotional abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction has been documented, with studies reporting that over 80% of adults experienced at least one ACE and nearly half experienced four or more during childhood (Almuneef et al., 2018). In comparison, national data from the United States indicate that approximately 64% of adults report at least one ACE and about 17% report four or more (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). These findings illustrate particularly high rates of childhood adversities in Saudi contexts relative to U.S. Through its emotionally supportive and engaging nature, storytelling can provide children with a secure and structured environment to process such experiences, assisting them in navigating emotional challenges and developing coping strategies (Isbell et al., 2004).

Moreover, the patriarchal structure of Saudi society often influences the expression and understanding of emotional experiences. As Alsulami (2019) noted, emotional expression in a patriarchal context may be more restrained, particularly in settings that prioritize family harmony and emotional control. Within this cultural framework, storytelling can offer children the space necessary to articulate their feelings and experiences in a secure and culturally acceptable manner. This can be especially significant in mitigating the long-term effects of emotional abuse, allowing children to process and express their emotions in a controlled, nonthreatening environment.

Despite the potential benefits of storytelling in fostering emotion regulation and supporting children's resilience in the context of adverse childhood experiences, there is limited research on how Saudi teachers perceive and utilize storytime for these purposes. Teachers' insights are critical, as they are at the forefront of implementing storytime in classrooms while balancing educational goals with cultural sensitivity. Understanding their perceptions can provide valuable guidance on how storytime activities may be adapted to support children's emotional development while aligning with cultural expectations regarding emotional expression (Masten, 2014).

The Asir region was selected for this study due to its unique cultural and geographical diversity, encompassing both urban and rural settings. This combination offers a rich context for exploring how teachers from varied backgrounds perceive and implement storytime practices. The region's social fabric reflects both traditional and modern influences, which may shape teachers' views on emotional expression and the use of storytelling as a pedagogical and emotionally supportive tool. More broadly, social norms in Saudi Arabia and particularly in regions such as Asir have long valued family

cohesion, social harmony, and emotional self-control. At the same time, recent social and educational developments have introduced greater openness to new teaching approaches, shaping a changing context for teachers' practices in the Asir region (Al-Rasheed, 2013).

Additionally, Saudi Arabia has more recently begun aligning its educational reforms with broader national initiatives, such as Vision 2030, which emphasizes mental health, well-being, and social resilience (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2016). The insights gained from this study will inform not only current teaching practices but also potentially shape future educational policies and teacher training programs. By exploring and investigating the perceptions of seven Saudi early childhood teachers of the role of storytime in emotional regulation, this study will contribute to enhancing children's emotional resilience and social-emotional competence, key elements in their success, both in school and in life.

Statement of the Problem

The capacity for emotion regulation, defined as the effective management and modulation of one's emotional states, is essential for fostering healthy socio-emotional development during early childhood. Extensive research shows children who struggle to regulate their emotions are at higher risk for problems like mental health issues, trouble socially integrating, and poor academic performance (Graziano et al., 2007). In contrast, children who build strong emotion regulation skills early on tend to be more resilient, disciplined, and mentally healthy (Sala et al., 2014).

Storytime in early childhood education can be a powerful teaching tool to help develop emotion regulation in young learners (Isbell et al., 2004). Through engaging stories and interactive storytelling approaches, children can explore both their own

emotions and those of story characters, social dynamics, and effective strategies for expressing feelings and overcoming challenges (Harper, 2016). Teachers play an important role in using storytelling to teach key emotion regulation skills. However, there is very little research on teachers' views of the effectiveness of storytime in improving children's emotional regulation. As those directly applying educational strategies, teachers have valuable insights into impacts on development, real-world challenges, and needs for more training or resources. Their perspectives are essential to optimize storytime for emotion regulation and address preparation and practice gaps.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to investigate early childhood preschool/pre-kindergarten/kindergarten teachers' perceptions regarding the potential for storytime activities to influence the development of emotion regulation skills in young learners. Emotion regulation is defined as the ability to recognize, understand, accept, and manage one's emotions effectively (Thompson, 2008a). This focus was chosen because teachers are directly engaged in daily classroom storytime, making them key informants on how such practices shape children's emotional development. This research study aims to address a gap in the existing literature by capturing seven Saudi teachers' beliefs and perspectives on the value of storytime for nurturing emotion regulation abilities in preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten-aged children.

Using a qualitative approach, in this study was conducted semi-structured interviews with preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten teachers to gather their insights into the role of storytime in children's emotional development. I was targeting teachers who already use storytime as an emotion regulation tool by administering a pre-

survey to identify them. In the interviews, I explored topics such as the types of storytime activities these teachers utilize in their classrooms, their intentions and desired outcomes when using stories with emotion regulation topics, their observations of impacts on students, and the challenges they face in this realm of their practice. In addition, I analyzed the first story each teacher mentions using emotional coding and compared it with the teacher's stated intentions (Saldaña, 2016).

The results provided an in-depth understanding of how early childhood educators view storytime as a strategy for fostering emotional competence. This understanding can inform efforts to capitalize on the benefits of storytime by illuminating areas where teachers may need more training or support. It can also shed light on how storytime activities and teacher practices can be tailored to optimally nurture emotion regulation skills.

By giving voice to teacher perspectives and expertise, this study seeks to gain valuable practical knowledge to guide the design and delivery of developmentally appropriate storytime experiences. The findings will help strengthen connections between research and practice in Saudi classrooms, paving the way for translating evidence into impactful changes in real-world classrooms. This has important implications for improving approaches to support social-emotional learning and enabling teachers to effectively harness the power of stories to nurture children's emotional well-being.

Background

Early Childhood Age Groups in Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, early childhood education generally includes preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten, serving children approximately ages 3 to 6 years.

Preschool programs typically enroll children aged 3–4 years, pre-kindergarten serves children aged 4–5 years, and kindergarten includes children aged 5–6 years, prior to entry into formal primary schooling. These stages are designed to support children’s holistic development, with particular emphasis on language, social interaction, emotional development, and school readiness (Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2018).

Definition of Teachers' Perceptions

Early childhood teachers' perceptions refer to the beliefs, attitudes, and understanding teachers working with young children hold about different aspects of their role and the children they teach. These perceptions may include beliefs about child development, attitudes toward teaching and learning, views on the significance of play and social-emotional development, as well as an understanding of the needs and abilities of young children. Teachers' beliefs, practices, and attitudes are crucial in understanding and improving educational processes (Pajares, 1992). They impact not only how teachers cope with challenges in their daily professional lives and their general well-being, but also how they shape the learning environment for students and significantly influence student motivation and achievement (Klieme & Vieluf, 2009). Teachers' assumptions about teaching and learning can significantly impact their practices in the classroom (Giles, 2015).

Definition of Storytime

Storytime is a regularly scheduled event where children gather to listen to stories being read or told. In early childhood education, Storytelling and story reading, which are similar but separate reading experiences, are crucial teaching practices that play a highly

effective role in educating young children about emotions, social interactions, and strategies for understanding and regulating their feelings. According to Isbell (2002), Story reading involves an adult or more experienced reader reading a book aloud to children while Storytelling involves an adult telling a story from memory or improvising a story. Agosto (2016) clarifies that storytelling, which should not be confused with story reading, involves telling a story from memory without the aid of a book or written script. Some storytellers memorize their stories, while others memorize key characters and events and recount the story more flexibly, allowing it to vary with each telling (p. 21). Both methods can help children build vocabulary, use more complex sentences, improve comprehension, and experience the power of spoken language (Isbell et al., 2004)

Digital Storytelling is defined as the art of combining the traditional art of Storytelling with digital multimedia, such as images, audio, and video. It involves using a mixture of digital graphics, text, recorded audio narration, video, and music to present information on a specific topic (Robin, 2008). Knowing this, storytelling does more than simply educate children about content; it also engages them emotionally and socially, supporting meaning-making, empathy development, and emotion regulation through interactive and multimodal experiences (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2020).

Procedural Definition of Storytime

For this research study, storytime is defined as a structured group activity led by an early childhood teacher where children are gathered together, typically in a circle. During storytime, the teacher reads aloud from a children's book or engages in storytelling using verbal narratives, or other materials such as puppets, props, etc. For

example, a teacher might use a puppet to act out the story of "Where the Wild Things Are" by Maurice Sendak (1963), bringing the characters' emotions to life through voice and movement and allowing children to emotionally connect, respond, and participate more actively in the story.

Definition of Social and Emotional Development

According to the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC; n.d.), social and emotional development refers to the ability of children to understand, control, and express their own emotions, as well as develop and maintain positive relationships with others (ECLKC, n.d). Also, social and emotional development in early childhood includes various aspects of a child's emotional well-being, social interactions, self-regulation, and empathy. This crucial developmental domain lays the foundation for children's growth, learning, and long-term mental health (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). In addition, CASEL defines social and emotional learning as the process through which children develop self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These core competencies support children's ability to understand and regulate emotions, build positive relationships, and succeed academically and socially (CASEL, 2020).

According to Serrat (2017), social and emotional development involves several key elements:

- Emotional awareness and regulation: This includes understanding and managing one's emotions appropriately, developing empathy for others, and recognizing their emotions.

- Social skills and interactions: Children learn to form positive and cooperative relationships with peers and adults, developing skills such as sharing, taking turns, and resolving conflicts peacefully. They also learn to interpret social cues and norms.
- Self-identity and self-esteem: Early childhood is a critical period for developing a positive sense of self, including self-concept, self-identity, and self-esteem, based on interactions and experiences with others.
- Communication and language skills: Effective verbal and nonverbal communication is crucial for social and emotional development. Children develop language skills to express their thoughts, needs, and feelings and understand others.

Definition of Children's Emotion Regulation

Children's emotional regulation is a critical component of social-emotional development in early childhood. It refers to their ability to effectively manage their emotions in a contextually appropriate and adaptive manner. Mastery of emotion regulation skills supports children's overall well-being and influences their success in both school and life. Emotion regulation is a complex process shaped by early neurobiological growth and affected by individual temperament (Thompson et al., 2008a).

During the first three years of life, children experience various emotions and express them without much thought. This includes feelings from happiness to fear and everything in between. Children use their caregivers, play, and private speech to develop skills in managing their emotions. This emotion regulation process is crucial for social-

emotional development, while caregiving adults' model self-regulation and provide support as co-regulators. With practice, children learn to pause between experiencing intense emotions and taking action, learning to plan and formulate appropriate responses in different situations. By building this capacity for emotional regulation, children learn to interact with others in more positive ways, build empathy, and effectively work through challenging situations. It is worth noting that cultural and social contexts define what is considered appropriate emotional regulation. (Cole et al., 2004; Eisenberg et al., 2000; Thompson, 1994).

Emotional regulation positively impacts performance and success in various areas of a child's life, including social relationships, empathizing, skill acquisition, and conflict resolution (Illinois State Board of Education, 2013). For example, a child may cry or hit when a toy is taken away, but with caregiver support, can learn to use words instead. In Saudi Arabia, cultural expectations influence how emotions are communicated and managed. For instance, boys may be encouraged to suppress displays of sadness or fear, while girls may be guided to express emotions more openly. Such expectations reflect broader social beliefs about gender roles and can shape the strategies teachers and caregivers use to support emotional expression and regulation in children.

Procedural Definition of Children's Emotion Regulation

For the purposes of this study, children's emotion regulation refers to the ability to develop the following:

- Knowing and naming different emotions (Emotional awareness and understanding).

- Showing emotions through facial expressions, sounds/words, body movements, and actions (Emotional expression).
- Using different ways to control the intensity and duration of emotions (Emotion regulation strategies).
- Keeping emotions at an appropriate level for the situation (Emotional self-control; Thompson, 2008a).

Research Questions

Qualitative Research Question

This research study seeks to understand and explore (preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten) teachers' perceptions of the role of storytime on children's emotion regulation and answer the following research question:

- What are early childhood teachers' (preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten) perceptions of the role of classroom storytime in supporting children's development of emotion regulation in the Asir region of Saudi Arabia?

The sub-questions of this research study include:

- What are the strategies employed by teachers during storytime to enhance children's emotion regulation?
- How do the professional experience, level of education, and age of teachers shape their perceptions and strategies regarding storytime for emotion regulation?
- What selection of stories do teachers prefer for facilitating emotional regulation, and what criteria inform these choices?

- What challenges and opportunities do teachers identify in integrating storytime aimed at emotion regulation into the (preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten) curriculum?
- How do teachers assess the effectiveness of storytime sessions in achieving emotional regulation outcomes in (preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten)?
- What professional development resources or support do teachers seek or recommend for effectively using storytime as a tool for emotion regulation?

Quantitative Research Questions

- What are the demographic characteristics (age, education level, and teaching experience) of early childhood teachers who report using storytime to support children's emotion regulation?
- Are teachers' demographic characteristics (age, education level, and teaching experience) associated with their reported use of storytime to support children's emotion regulation?

Significance of Study

The ability to regulate emotions is a crucial skill for young children to develop, as it lays the foundation for their social-emotional competence, mental health, and overall well-being (Denham et al., 2003; Eisenberg et al., 2010). Children who struggle with emotion regulation are at higher risk for behavioral problems, peer rejection, and academic difficulties (Compas et al., 2017; Trentacosta & Shaw, 2009). Therefore, it is essential to explore effective storytime and literacy-based strategies that promote,

scaffold, and sustain children's emotion regulation development during early childhood (CASEL, 2020; Denham et al., 2003; Vygotsky, 1978).

Storytime, a common practice in early childhood classrooms, has been recognized as a valuable tool for promoting children's emotion regulation skills (Ilibagiza, 2021; Upitis, 2010). Through carefully selected stories and guided discussions, teachers can help children identify and understand different emotions, learn appropriate ways to express and manage their feelings, and develop empathy and perspective-taking abilities (Hadaway & Mundy, 1999; Karnieli-Miller et al., 2010). Despite the potential benefits of storytime for emotion regulation, however, there is a lack of research that specifically examines teachers' perspectives and practices in using storytime for this purpose.

This qualitative study aims, then, to explore teachers' perceptions of the role of storytime in supporting children's emotion regulation development. By gaining insights from experienced early childhood educators, this research can contribute to a deeper understanding of how storytime can be leveraged as a valuable tool for fostering emotion regulation skills in young children. The findings of this study may inform teacher training programs, curriculum development, and best practices in early childhood education, ultimately benefiting children's social-emotional development and overall well-being.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides the theoretical framework for the study with a review of major theories and how they guided the research, followed by a review of empirical research. The empirical research review will be organized into sections that cover different aspects of the paper topic, including:

- The Importance of Social and Emotional Development in Early Childhood.
- Social and Emotional Development Related to Emotion Regulation.
- The Role of Story Time in Emotion Regulation.
- Early Childhood Education in Saudi Arabia.

Theories that Guided This Research

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory

In this study, the microsystem refers to classroom interactions, while the macrosystem reflects cultural values influencing story content. Bronfenbrenner identifies five environmental systems in the development of this bioecological systems , which encounters the bioecological systems around the child and how they affect behaviors and influence one another; the this bioecological systems emphasizes both immediate environments, such as parent-child interactions that directly affect children's daily lived experiences, as well as more distal contexts, such as institutions that do not directly interact with the child but influence development indirectly, such as childcare policies, and cultural values. These contexts will likely shape children's social and emotional development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). In this study, the microsystem refers to

classroom interactions, while the macrosystem reflects cultural values influencing story content.

1. **Microsystem:** The immediate environment in which an individual interacts regularly, including family, peers, and close relationships. The microsystem plays a crucial role in shaping emotional regulation. Healthy relationships within the microsystem provide support, validation, and guidance, which can contribute to effective emotional regulation. According to Frankel and Hughes (2012), parental influences can be seen at the microsystem level, where caregivers and parents directly impact children's emotional self-regulation skills. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory can help to frame our understanding of the complex interplay between individual, family, and broader environmental factors that affect children's emotional regulation.
2. **Mesosystem:** The interactions and relationships between different components of the microsystem, such as connections between family, school, and community. The mesosystem influences emotional regulation by facilitating consistent messages and expectations across different environments. Positive connections between these microsystem elements can provide a stable and nurturing foundation for developing emotional regulation skills.
3. **Exosystem:** External environments that indirectly impact an individual's development, including societal institutions and community organizations. The exosystem can influence emotional regulation through factors such as access to mental health resources, community support, and cultural norms regarding

emotional expression and regulation. Supportive and well-resourced exosystems can contribute to healthier emotional regulation practices.

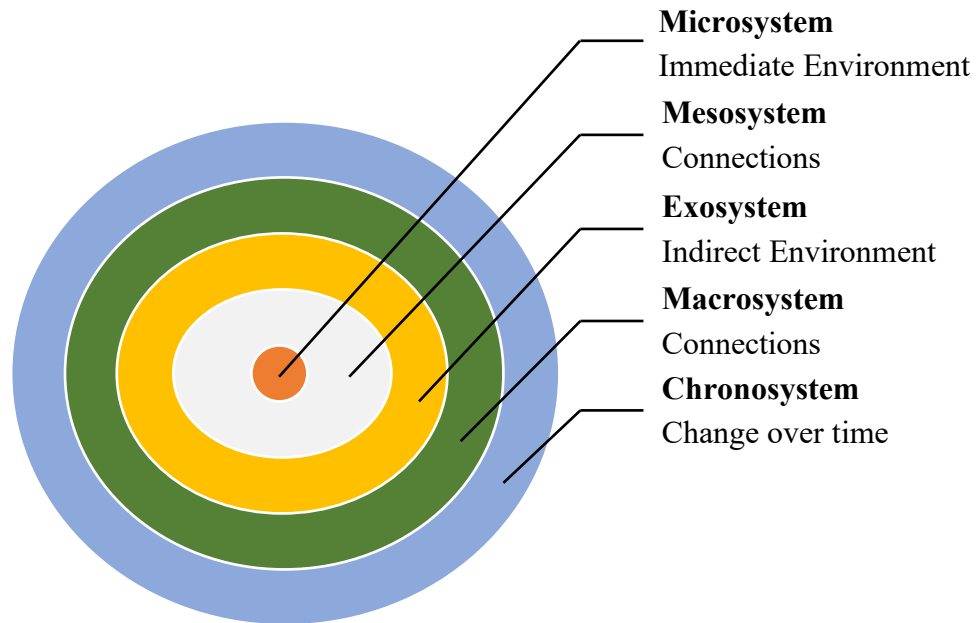
4. **Macrosystem:** Broader cultural and ideological beliefs, values, and norms that shape the other environmental systems. The macrosystem greatly impacts emotional regulation by influencing cultural attitudes towards emotions, socialization practices, and the availability of emotional regulation resources. Cultural values and norms can shape how individuals learn to regulate their emotions within a given society.
5. **Chronosystem:** The dimension of time and how environmental systems change and evolve over time, encompassing historical events, personal life transitions, and sociocultural shifts. The chronosystem influences emotional regulation by introducing new challenges, opportunities, and sources of stress. Changes within the environmental systems over time can require individuals to adapt and develop new emotional regulation strategies (see Figure 2.1).

Storytime can be a powerful tool for promoting children's emotional regulation.

Through the microsystem level, storytime can allow children to develop relationships with their teachers and peers. At the mesosystem level, storytime can help children connect with their community and learn the importance of following rules and respecting authority figures. At the exosystem level, storytime can help children learn the importance of making responsible decisions. At the macrosystem level, storytime can help children learn about the importance of cultural norms and values. Lastly, at the chronosystem level, storytime can help children learn how their emotions change in different contexts.

Figure 2.1

The Ecological Systems



Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory conceptualizes human development as a socially mediated process in which children acquire knowledge, skills, and cultural values through interactions with more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978). Central to this theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), defined as the distance between what a child can accomplish independently and what the child can achieve with guided support. Learning occurs most effectively when adults intentionally scaffold children's understanding within this zone.

Within early childhood classrooms, storytime functions as a powerful scaffolding context for supporting children's emotion regulation. During storytime, teachers act as

more knowledgeable others by modeling emotional language, guiding discussions, and prompting reflection on characters' feelings and behaviors. Through these interactions, children are supported in moving from basic emotional responses toward more regulated and socially appropriate emotional understanding.

Stories also provide opportunities for modeling and role-play, as characters encounter emotional challenges and demonstrate strategies for coping with frustration, fear, or disappointment. Observing and discussing these emotional experiences allows children to internalize regulation strategies and apply them to their own experiences. Additionally, storytime supports language and emotional vocabulary development, enabling children to label emotions and articulate their feelings more effectively.

Vygotsky's emphasis on social and cultural context further aligns with the use of storytime for emotion regulation. Storytime is a collective classroom experience in which children engage in shared meaning-making, consider multiple perspectives, and learn culturally situated norms for emotional expression. Emotional regulation, from this perspective, is not solely an individual skill but a socially constructed process shaped through interaction, language, and cultural tools (Cong-Lem, 2022).

Together, these elements position storytime as an instructional practice that bridges children's current emotional capabilities and their emerging regulation skills, operating squarely within the Zone of Proximal Development (see Figure 1.2).

Empirical Research

This literature review examined empirical research related to children's emotion regulation and storytime practices in early childhood education. The reviewed studies included qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research designs. The literature

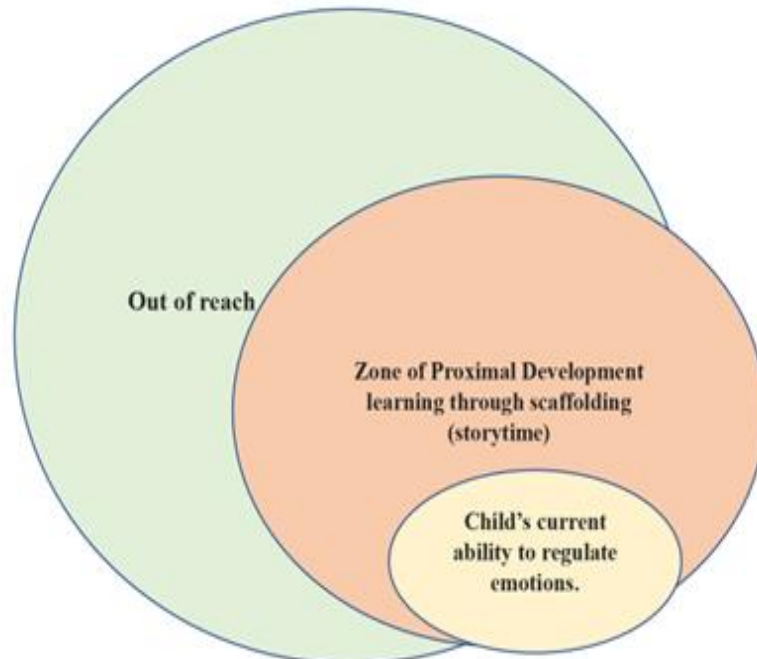
was analyzed to identify recurring themes, which guided the organization of this section into key topic areas relevant to the study.

The Importance of Social and Emotional Development in Early Childhood

Preschool years are the best for a child to develop socially and emotionally. According to Sala et al. (2014), this is because these are the years a child starts to be more aware of their feelings, want to be independent, and have friendships. Social and emotional development are the behaviors that show a child's emotional growth and their ability to effectively traverse their world through the relations created with their peers and adults.

Figure 2.2

Zone of Proximal Development



Preschool years are the best for a child to develop socially and emotionally. According to Sala et al. (2014), this is because these are the years a child starts to be more aware of their feelings, want to be independent, and have friendships. Social and emotional development are the behaviors that show a child's emotional growth and their ability to effectively traverse their world through the relations created with their peers and adults.

Social and emotional development forms the foundation upon which all other areas of life are built. Dennis and Kelemen (2009) found through interviews with teachers that social and emotional development is perceived to facilitate the development of self-awareness in preschool children. Self-awareness refers to the ability of a child to focus on themselves and how their emotions, thoughts, or actions do or do not match with their internal standards. In preschool, a child becomes self-aware through different activities such as physical education classes or group discussions. Through these activities, they learn to turn-take, engage in conversations with their peers, acknowledge others' names, and even use their names and self-evaluate. They employed a qualitative approach, gathering perceptions from educators on the impact of social and emotional development on preschoolers' self-awareness. In the study by Denham et al. (2012), the significance of teachers in fostering young children's emotional competence was explored, highlighting the direct correlation between children's emotional regulation and their self-awareness. This investigation utilized observational methodologies to assess how teacher-led activities contribute to the development of children's ability to regulate emotions, demonstrating that self-aware children, guided by their teachers, exhibit enhanced

emotional control. This connection emphasizes the critical role of educators in nurturing emotional competence among preschoolers.

Children can regulate their emotions since self-awareness helps them become conscious of their thoughts, behavior, and feelings, which are all foundations of emotion regulation. For instance, a self-aware child recognizes when he or she is experiencing an emotion such as anger. Recognition of these emotions and responding to them appropriately is as well built in childhood through secure attachments. A child with a secure attachment is likely to respond well to anger compared to an insecure one (Stefan & Negrean, 2021). Therefore, they can respond and not react to the anger, which qualifies them to be emotionally regulated.

In addition to helping children regulate their emotions, teachers state that self-awareness elevates their chances of succeeding academically in school. According to a study conducted by Graziano et al. (2007), emotionally regulated children become self-aware, and through this self-awareness, they become motivated to learn. For instance, a child motivated to learn will arrive on time at school and complete their homework without having to be followed around. Also, by becoming self-aware, they develop a positive attitude toward school (Steed et al., 2022). A positive attitude is important for academic success. Self-aware children are also keen to participate in class activities. Thus, preschooler children perform well academically through self-awareness, which helps them be motivated to learn, develop a positive attitude, and participate in class activities.

Beyond fostering self-awareness, social and emotional development in preschool also enhances children's ability to form positive, meaningful relationships. The research

by Ornaghi et al. (2016) delves into this aspect, investigating the impact of emotional knowledge training on toddlers' social behaviors. Through an intervention-based approach, the study identified that such training significantly bolsters toddlers' social skills, leading to an increase in prosocial behaviors and a decrease in aggression towards peers in nursery settings. This underscores the transformative power of emotional education in early childhood on interpersonal relations. In their longitudinal study, Graziano et al. (2007) investigated the connections among emotional regulation, self-awareness, and academic motivation in preschool children, highlighting the foundational role of social skills in cultivating positive relationships. Their research underscores that the ability to regulate emotions and self-awareness directly contributes to children's motivation in academic settings, reinforcing the critical importance of developing these competencies for both interpersonal success and educational engagement. As stipulated by Steed et al. (2022), examples of social skills that help children create meaningful relationships include cooperation, active listening, effective communication, and empathy. Empathy, defined as the ability to put oneself in the situation of another, is especially important in preschool years since, at this age, children are starting to be aware of their feelings, and it helps a great deal when one can empathize with them (Ellis et al., 2013). Meaningful relationships with peers require a child to possess these social skills, which are possible through social and emotional development.

Furthermore, a child with meaningful and positive relationships tends to be happy and well-adjusted. Spinrad et al. (2006) state that human beings are social, and it takes human relationships to see them achieve happiness in their lives. It does not only apply to adults but also to children in preschool. For instance, an individual with a problem can

share it with their friends and get help. In the study conducted by Spinrad et al. (2006), it was found that children with meaningful relationships with their peers were happier than others who did not have friends. The reason for this is that they have friends to play with and share their time in school. The same children were found to be well-adjusted compared to those with no friends, and the reason for this is that positive friendships help one develop positive behaviors that help in averting maladjustments. According to Steed et al. (2022), children with positive relationships also have better mental health than children without meaningful relationships. Due to these meaningful relationships, they can perform better in academics.

Therefore, children in preschool need to develop socially and emotionally, as social and emotional development supports the development of self-awareness. Self-awareness helps in many areas, including emotion regulation and academic success. Social and emotional development during these years also helps children develop positive and meaningful relationships. These relationships help them become happy and well-adjusted.

Social and Emotional Development Related to Emotion Regulation

Just like there are signs of physical development in children, so are there signs of social and emotional development related to emotional regulation. As postulated by Dennis and Kelemen (2009), teachers state that a child who can regulate their reaction to strong emotions such as anger, frustration, or embarrassment shows social and emotional development. It is usual for children to experience these emotions. In instances where social and emotional development has not taken place, the child will not be able to

regulate emotions, and it is in such instances that they will, for example, hit their head against the wall in anger.

Also, instances where a child can calm down after something upsetting or exciting has happened to them are social and emotional development related to emotion regulation. According to teachers, it is normal for a child to be excited or upset after, for example, they have passed or failed their examinations respectively. However, being unable to calm down after this shows the child is not emotionally well-developed. Dennis and Kelemen 2009 also state that being able to focus on a task and refocusing this attention on a different task is a sign of social and emotional development, which shows a child can regulate their emotions.

Behaving in ways that may help them get along with others is a sign of social development related to emotional regulation in children. Children may only learn how to foster and maintain relationships at their age if they are well-developed socially. It also means they cannot regulate themselves emotionally. It takes the help of teachers, parents, and peers to know how to do this, which shows social and emotional development. According to Durlak et al. (2011), schools that have implemented Social and Emotional Learning programs SEL have reported improved academic outcomes, reduced problem behaviors, and improved social and emotional skills of students. Teacher training is also crucial to promoting social and emotional education in schools. Teachers who have been trained in SEL can create a supportive classroom environment, build positive relationships with their students, and promote the development of social and emotional skills in their students (Zins et al., 2004). Durlak et al. (2011) and Zins et al. (2004) examine the effects of SEL programs in schools through quantitative analysis of program

outcomes, involving teachers and students to assess academic performance and emotional well-being.

Teachers believe that social and cultural contexts determine how well a child can identify and manage their emotions. As every aspect of development begins with caregiver relationships, so does emotion regulation in childhood. According to Bernier et al. (2010), attentive caregivers who meet their toddlers' needs consistently form a basis on which children have healthy emotional regulation. The infant needs their caregiver to soothe them when in distress, and if this is done appropriately, children gain trust and security with the adults around them. According to a study by Stefan and Negrean (2021), this determines a child's attachment style. Attachment styles refer to interacting with and attaching oneself to the people who matter. There are four attachment styles. These include secure, avoidant, disorganized, and anxious-ambivalent. The last three attachment styles are insecure, which all stem from childhood. For instance, according to a study conducted by Ellis et al. (2013), to determine the role of maternal emotional coaching, it was found that there is a higher probability that an adult who is overly reactive when handling emotions such as anger experienced the same in their childhood from the adults around them, and the adult in this case, was the mother. According to Stefan and Negrean (2021), secure children are less likely to show under-regulation when compared to insecurely attached preschoolers, especially when handling an emotion such as anger. Ellis et al. (2013) and Stefan and Negrean (2021) use a combination of observational and self-report methodologies to explore the impact of caregiver behavior and attachment styles on emotion regulation, focusing on children's reactions to emotional challenges and their ability to manage anger.

The development of emotion regulation in childhood increases when a child is 36 months old. As Bernier et al. (2010) state, children develop the ability to cope with their emotional experiences from birth up to nine months through co-regulation. Stefan and Negrean (2021) as well agree with the above. From birth to nine months, a child can begin to apply self-soothing strategies such as grasping objects to calm themselves or sucking on their hands. At this age, they can also vocalize and use facial cues to get the caregiver's attention. For instance, they can initiate eye contact or cry.

Bernier et al. (2010) employed a longitudinal study design, closely observing caregiver-child interactions from birth to 36 months to understand the foundation of emotional regulation. As Bernier et al. (2010) state, a child continues to learn from and depend on their caregivers from seven up to eighteen months. They also start using more complex and purposeful skills to manage their emotions. At this age, they can communicate their needs to the caregiver, for instance, by shaking their head or pointing to objects. They are also able to apply social referencing when in uncertain situations. For example, in the presence of a new face, they can look at their caregiver's face for reassurance. From 16 to 24 months, a child begins to recognize a particular range of emotions and starts to manage them by using both caregiver and soothing strategies. A child at this age can use verbal and non-verbal communication to show they need their caregiver. They can, for instance, call their caregiver by name. A child can also begin to name some emotions and use play to sort out emotions and have control over them. For example, a child can project his or her feelings onto an object by grabbing it and holding it tightly when in a happy mood. Children from 21 to 36 months can better manage their emotions and sustain regulation. This is because they start to differentiate which

strategies and skills are used in different circumstances. They still need, however, the support of their caregivers. From 21 to 36 months, children can firmly communicate their needs and wants verbally. For instance, a child can tell their caregiver they want to be picked up. Children also, by this age, know how to ask for the support of their caregivers when they feel overwhelmed by emotions (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Development of Emotion Regulation in Childhood according to Bernier et al. (2010)

Age Range	Emotional Development
Birth to 9 months	- Co-regulation - Self-soothing strategies - Vocalizing and facial cues
7 to 18 months	- Communication of needs - Social referencing
16 to 24 months	- Recognizing emotions - Managing emotions with caregiver and soothing strategies - Naming emotions and using play to sort them out
21 to 36 months	- Better emotion management and sustained regulation - Differentiating strategies and skills based on circumstances - Verbal communication of needs and wants - Seeking caregiver support when overwhelmed

Note: Social and cultural contexts influence the development of emotion regulation.

The Role of Story Time in Emotion Regulation

Storytelling has been a teaching technique for thousands of years. listening to stories has a way of evoking emotions in human beings (Gunawardena & Brown, 2021).

Teachers in the 21st century classroom continue using story reading and oral storytelling in their teaching curriculum. These stories can be read to them; they can look at pictures and sometimes sing songs as well. Further, stories can speak to their culture. Teachers' perceptions of the effects of storytime on children's emotion regulation are reflected in the findings of the following studies. Tillott et al. (2024) used the children's book, *Game On*, (Tillott, 2013) to help early school children understand their temperament and improve emotional regulation. Using interviews with teachers and focus groups with children aged 4–7, they reported that storytelling created a reflective and emotionally safe environment that supported children's self-regulation.

According to Bartan (2020), teachers use a variety of storytelling strategies during storytime, with story reading (read-aloud) being one of the most commonly used approaches, in which teachers read aloud from storybooks to engage children. The study method was observational or survey techniques to gather teachers' practices and perceptions. Other methods used during story time include story cards and computer storytelling (Bartan, 2020). In a study conducted by Betawi (2014) to investigate the effect story time has on toddlers' social and emotional skills, it was found that story time equips toddlers with language skills. This study utilized observational methods and assessments to evaluate language skills and emotional responses in toddlers. These assessments involved structured evaluations of language proficiency and emotional responses in toddlers before and after participating in story time sessions. Both Bartan (2020) and Betwi (2014) find the impact of storytelling methods on children's development. While Betawi's study specifically focuses on the effect of story time on toddlers' social and emotional skills, Bartan's research delves into the use of storytelling

methods by teachers and their effects on children's understanding and attention span. Despite examining slightly different aspects of storytelling, both studies share a common interest in understanding how storytelling influences children's cognitive and socio-emotional development. Therefore, Bartan's findings may align with Betawi's in highlighting the importance of storytelling in promoting various aspects of children's development.

Developing language skills is essential for emotion regulation since it is through language that a child can verbalize their emotions. Research in the childhood development of language has revealed that Storytelling can facilitate language development (Denham et al., 2003). This is because as a child hears an adult speak a language around them, they can absorb the vocabulary. They later can use the vocabulary to express themselves. Betawi (2014) states that vocabulary depends on the child's input. Betawi (2014) and Bartan suggest that teachers perceive that language is essential in emotion regulation because expressive language makes it easier for children to communicate their thoughts and ideas—one of the most important steps to emotion regulation is being able to verbalize emotions. For example, language makes it easier for a child to say or express that they are sad. As it is, children are usually not born with a set of vocabulary. They acquire and build vocabulary, especially from those they interact with in their early years, including teachers. Thus, when children hear a language spoken, they become better at articulating their experiences and thoughts. They become better at expressing themselves. Being precise in spoken language gives children some independence in expressing their needs and emotion (Betawi, 2014). Therefore, Denham

et al. (2012) conclude that teachers understand that engaging in meaningful interactions with preschoolers supports a child's language development.

Consequently, through language development, children learn how to verbalize their emotions, which is the first step toward emotion regulation (Denham et al., 2003). Other than helping children verbalize their emotions, storytime helps them express their emotions, which is also key to emotion regulation. In the early years of a child's development, a child must be exposed to rich language with a precise and descriptive vocabulary. This is according to Denham et al. (2003). Exposing children to such vocabulary prepares them to write and read. The ability to read and write is an essential part of emotion regulation. This is because reading and writing form the basis of communication. For one to express their emotions as well as manage them, they must be good communicators.

Other than aiding in language development, story time helps in emotion regulation because stories provide a framework for building empathy. The above assertion is according to the findings of a study conducted by (Harper, 2016b). Empathy, by definition, is the ability of a child to put oneself in the shoes of another and be able to experience and understand the emotions they are going through. One of the most important factors in the regulation of emotion is empathy. The reason for this is that empathy restrains one from engaging in harmful behavior, especially in situations where emotions are high (Harper, 2016b).

Through story time, children gain better insight into themselves and other people around them. Gaining insight into what an individual is helps one regulate their emotions. According to Harper (2016), children with guardians who take them through emotions

understand themselves better than those who do not. The reason for this is that stories have different characters playing different roles, and sometimes, their roles elicit emotions (Denham et al., 2003). When children listen to or watch these stories, they create a connection with the help of emotions elicited. For instance, one character in a story might express how happy, sad, or angry they are in different ways. Harper (2016) stipulates that this enables the child to tap into the character's emotions, creating an emotional connection. Being able to feel and experience these emotions enables children to understand themselves. They can, for example, understand that it is acceptable to experience sadness and express it acceptably. Further, they can, in the end, be able to reflect on their thoughts as well as express them with an emotion attached, and this is part of emotion regulation (Denham et al., 2012).

Self-regulation is a vital aspect of social-emotional learning. As part of SEL, stories have been incorporated into the curriculum to help children learn and master the art of emotion regulation. Teachers use various strategies in Storytelling as part of teaching emotion regulation.

According to a study done by Sala et al. (2014) to investigate the strategies of emotion regulation in preschoolers, it was concluded that teachers use picture books to develop emotion regulation. Preschoolers were presented with picture books with relatable scenarios and characters. According to Bartan (2020), relatable scenarios and characters help children learn that it is acceptable to experience these emotions and that their feelings are normal. This is because while they read the stories in the books or the stories read to them, they immerse themselves fully in the feelings of their favorite

characters. By doing this, children find and experience ways to manage their emotions depending on the outcome of the stories in the books.

As stipulated by Bartan (2020), teachers believe that the picture books read to the students only have a lasting effect if questions are asked at the end. Asking questions at the end is important because it can help start conversations concerning the characters' feelings and how they managed to cope with their emotions. It is vital to drive the point home by letting the children name the emotions they noticed in the stories. Learners can then be asked to state how they felt about the way characters in the stories managed their emotions. During these conversations, children can be allowed to discuss how emotions are regulated and also talk about how they could improve or find their ways of emotion regulation. Doing the above builds confidence in recognizing and managing emotions among children, thus, emotion regulation.

In addition to understanding emotions, the Process Model of Emotion Regulation highlights the importance of teaching children strategies to regulate emotions. These strategies involve conscious efforts to modulate emotions' intensity, duration, or expression. Various techniques can be employed, such as cognitive reappraisal, which consists of reframing a situation's meaning or significance to change one's emotional response. Other strategies include distraction, problem-solving, seeking social support, and engaging in activities that promote positive emotions (Koole & Aldao, 2016). I think that it is possible for writers to use this model as a basis for writing their emotional stories by following the model and including their stories with the strategies suggested by the model.

Other than picture books, Bartan (2020) stated that teachers recognized teacher selected storybook reading as an effective storytelling strategy through which children can develop emotion regulation. In this teacher selected storybook reading strategy, a particular book is chosen by the teacher according to the interests, developmental levels, and ages of the children. Sala et al. (2014) agree that story-tale reading helps children regulate emotion, as picture books have the same effect, as discussed above. Another strategy is Storytelling with cards. In this technique, the cards are prepared according to the characters or themes found in the story. The teacher must choose the appropriate cards when handling Storytelling with cards. They should ensure that the story cards are big enough for every child to see and that these cards can be supported using cardboard.

Teachers also used digital storytelling as an instructional approach to support children's emotion regulation through the use of television strips (Bartan, 2020). In this approach, a television box is used to display sequential television strips that narrate a story. These television strips are considered a form of digital storytelling, and teachers perceived this approach as particularly effective for supporting emotion regulation because it engages multiple senses and helps children perceive emotional situations from different perspectives (Bartan, 2020).

Social stories came to light through Carol Gray in 1998 to specifically help children on the autism disorder spectrum to help them learn social skills. However, they are used in every classroom today to help children learn and develop social-emotional skills. As part of evidence-based practice, social stories help young children with difficulties in attending to, understanding, processing information about, and using social

skills and behaviors in somewhat challenging social situations (Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2018).

According to a study conducted by Denham et al. (2012), it was found that teachers form part of early socializers for young children. The research further concluded that socially and emotionally stable teachers foster an environment that encourages positive student-teacher relationships. Humphries et al. (2018) stipulated that emotion regulation highly depends on the kind of relationships a child has with his or her early socializers. Thus, teachers view their relationships with students as a factor that leads to children learning the art of emotion regulation. This is because when telling or conducting social stories sessions in the classroom, learners learn to associate freely with their teachers and how to express themselves by observing teachers express different emotions throughout the lessons.

Humphries et al. (2018) resonate with teachers' viewpoint that social stories help children develop age-appropriate conflict resolution strategies that form the basis of emotion regulation. Teachers can tell social stories where characters go through circumstances that predispose them to conflicts. For instance, a story might be told of how a friend lost another's ballpoint, creating a conflict that needed to be solved. The teacher can end this story by stating how they solved the conflict and renewed their friendship. From this story, students learn how they can solve conflicts. The Humphries et al. (2018) study involved 15 early childhood teachers from pre-kindergarten to 3rd grade, with a majority identifying as African American. The study used semi-structured focus groups to explore teachers' perspectives on social-emotional competence (SEC) and social-emotional learning (SEL) in urban classrooms. Participants were divided into

focus groups based on the grade levels they taught to discuss their roles in promoting SEC, their views on SEL programming, and the desired components of such programs. The methodology included qualitative content analysis of the focus group discussions to identify emerging themes related to SEL programming and implementation.

According to Denham et al. (2003), the ability to solve conflicts successfully is a step toward learning emotion regulation. As students listen to and tell these stories, they learn the basics of emotion regulation, such as conflict resolution. Thus, teachers know that the social stories told in class go a long way in helping students develop emotion regulation by equipping them with skills to handle circumstances that charge their emotions.

Bierman et al. (2016) stated that preschool social and emotional learning has the potential to minimize the school readiness gap connected with growing up in low-income homes and communities when exposure to adversity is elevated, and childcare and preschools are often of low quality. According to Bredekamp et al. (2022), authors of "Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs," preschoolers' social development can be categorized into four distinct aspects, including (1) friendships, relationships with instructors and classmates, and social interactions; (2) growth in prosocial behavior; (3) challenges with aggression and other difficult behaviors; and (4) a sense of awareness and consideration for others.

Additionally, preschool teacher and researcher Vivian Paley (1986) introduced a unique approach known as storytelling and story acting in the mid-1980s, which was innovative at the time for positioning children as active creators of stories and using dramatization as a means to support language development, social interaction, and

emotional expression. This practice involves two main components: dictation and dramatization. In the dictation phase, children share their stories, which an adult transcribes. These stories allow children to express themselves, process emotions, and make sense of their experiences. The dramatization phase involves acting out the stories, with children taking on different roles and bringing the narratives to life.

Paley's approach to Storytelling involved creating a community of young storytellers who would take turns sharing their own stories with their peers. This practice encouraged children to express their unique perspectives and experiences, develop empathy for others, and learn how to listen actively and respectfully. Paley believed that through Storytelling, children could develop important social and emotional competencies such as communication skills, self-reflection, and conflict resolution. Children could learn how to connect with others and build positive relationships by actively listening to their peers' stories.

According to Cooper et al. (2007), the study shows that children who participated in the storytelling curriculum showed significant gains in both vocabulary knowledge and literacy skills compared to their peers in similar settings who did not participate. The study also provides an overview of Paley's storytelling curriculum, which involves dictation and dramatization activities. It explains that the curriculum allows children to express their thoughts and ideas through Storytelling and story acting, fostering their language development and narrative skills. The article emphasizes that the storytelling curriculum aligns with the principles of authentic learning, providing meaningful and relevant experiences for children. The methodology involved dictation and dramatization activities, conducted four days a week, with the storytelling curriculum supplementing

the school's mandated literacy curriculum. The study suggests that a play-based curriculum, such as Paley's storytelling approach, is crucial for the development of imagination, symbolic thinking, comprehension, and problem-solving skills, which are essential for academic success and social success. The findings of the study demonstrate that participating in the storytelling curriculum led to significant gains in vocabulary knowledge and reading readiness among both English Language Learners and English speakers (Cooper et al., 2007).

Paley's storytelling and story-acting practice are valuable instructional practices for early childhood educators. These practices support children's emotional and social development while also nurturing emerging literacy skills. By inviting children to share their own stories, encouraging creativity, and facilitating collaborative story enactment, these practices foster engagement in storytelling, strengthen peer relationships, and promote holistic development in young learners.

Early Childhood Education in Saudi Arabia

The development of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Saudi Arabia has evolved significantly over the years, reflecting broader socio-economic transformations within the country. This evolution is marked by increased government investment and policy changes aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of ECE. The introduction of kindergarten in Saudi Arabia began in 1974 with the establishment of preschool and kindergarten classes. This marked a significant shift in the educational landscape of the Kingdom, recognizing the importance of early childhood education in the developmental stages of young children (Aljabreen & Lash, 2016).

Significant increases in the number of kindergartens classrooms, kindergarten aged children, and teachers over the past four decades (1975–2015) reflect the Saudi government’s commitment to enhancing early childhood education (ECE). From a modest beginning in 1975, with only ten classrooms and seventeen staff members, enrollment expanded substantially, reaching 182,556 students and 22,189 teachers by the 2013–2014 school year. This growth underscores sustained governmental investment in ECE aimed at expanding access and improving educational quality.

In parallel with this expansion, Saudi Arabia has implemented several curricular reforms to modernize ECE. Notably, the shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches represents a significant transformation, emphasizing children’s active engagement, self-directed learning, and the development of early critical thinking skills. Teacher preparation programs have also evolved, with several universities now offering specialized degrees in early childhood education to ensure that educators are adequately prepared to meet the developmental needs of young learners (Alqassem et al., 2016).

The integration of cultural values into the curriculum is particularly important in Saudi Arabia, as early childhood education incorporates Islamic values that reflect the country’s religious and cultural foundations and shape both educational content and teaching practices. The quality of education and teacher preparation still varies considerably, and there is a need for ongoing professional development to ensure that ECE standards are uniformly high across the Kingdom (Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2018).

Discussion

Storytime is a popular instructional activity in early childhood classrooms, and there is growing research on the potential benefits of storytime for emotion regulation. Some studies have found that storytime can help children to identify and understand their emotions, while others have found that it can help children to develop coping skills for dealing with difficult emotions. While emotional regulation has been acknowledged as an important part of social development, there needs to be more comprehensive research that specifically examines the relationship between story time and children's emotional regulation.

Conducting research that explores the relationship between story time and children's emotional regulation while considering teachers' perspectives can provide valuable insights. More specifically, it can offer a comprehensive understanding of how story time can be effectively utilized as a strategy to foster emotional regulation in young children.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Overview

This research study aimed to investigate early childhood teachers' perceptions regarding the potential for storytime activities to influence the development of emotion regulation skills in young learners. In Saudi Arabian culture, there was a growing recognition of the importance of social-emotional learning and the role of educators in fostering these skills in young children. However, traditional educational approaches in the region have often prioritized academic skills over social-emotional development (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Consequently, there was a need to investigate culturally relevant and effective practices that could be integrated into early childhood classrooms to support children's emotion regulation abilities. A qualitative approach was adopted, focusing on in-depth interviews with early childhood teachers. This study aimed to address a gap in the existing literature by capturing teachers' beliefs and perspectives on the value of storytime for nurturing emotion regulation abilities in early childhood. Additionally, it sought to understand the strategies teachers used during storytime to promote emotional regulation among early childhood classes in Saudi Arabia.

A grounded theory approach was used in this study to develop an explanatory understanding of how early childhood teachers perceive and use storytime to support children's emotion regulation. This qualitative approach was appropriate because it allows theory to emerge from participants' experiences and interactions, focusing on

processes and actions related to a specific phenomenon rather than testing predefined hypotheses (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

This method was suitable for capturing the evolving perspectives of preschool teachers regarding the role of storytime in emotion regulation. To systematically analyze the stories shared by preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten teachers, emotional coding techniques were applied to story transcripts. The primary goal was to examine whether the emotional content within these narratives aligned with the teachers' expressed beliefs and intentions shared during the interviews. Specifically, the analysis aimed to identify how instances of emotion regulation depicted in the stories reflected and supported the strategies and perspectives discussed by the teachers.

Researcher Positionality

I acknowledge my positionality as an important component of this qualitative study. I am a Saudi early childhood educator with academic training in early childhood education and a professional interest in social-emotional development and instructional practices, including storytime. This background provided me with contextual and cultural insight into early childhood education settings in Saudi Arabia, as well as familiarity with classroom routines, curricular expectations, and cultural values related to children's emotional development.

At the same time, I remained aware of the potential influence of my personal experiences and assumptions on data collection and interpretation. To minimize bias, I adopted a reflective stance throughout the research process, including during interview design, data collection, and analysis. Reflexive practices such as memo writing, careful attention to participants' language, and grounding interpretations in participants' own

words were used to ensure that the findings reflected teachers' perspectives rather than my preconceived views. This reflexive approach aligned with the principles of grounded theory, which emphasize allowing theory to emerge from the data through systematic analysis rather than imposing predetermined assumptions.

Research Questions

Main Research Question:

- What are early childhood teachers' (preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten) perceptions of the role of classroom storytime in supporting children's development of emotion regulation in the Asir region of Saudi Arabia?

The sub-questions of this research study include:

- What are the strategies employed by teachers during storytime to enhance children's emotion regulation?
- How do the professional experience, level of education, and age of teachers shape their perceptions and strategies regarding storytime for emotion regulation?
- What selection of stories do teachers prefer for facilitating emotional regulation, and what criteria inform these choices?
- What challenges and opportunities do teachers identify in integrating storytime aimed at emotion regulation into the (preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten) curriculum?

- How do teachers assess the effectiveness of storytime sessions in achieving emotional regulation outcomes in (preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten)?
- What professional development resources or support do teachers seek or recommend for effectively using storytime as a tool for emotion regulation?
- What are early childhood preschool teachers' perceptions of the role of classroom storytime in supporting the development of emotion regulation in preschool children?

This chapter outlines the research methodology for this study exploring teachers' perceptions of storytime for supporting emotion regulation in preschoolers. First, it describes the qualitative research design selected to align with the goals of deeply understanding teacher experiences and perspectives. Second, the chapter explains the context for the research. Details are then provided on the preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten teacher participants, including the rationale for focusing on this group and recruitment methods to get a diverse sample. The chapter then discusses the primary instruments for qualitative data collection. Additionally, ethical considerations like informed consent, confidentiality, and approval processes were covered.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was employed to allow for an in-depth exploration of teachers' experiences and perceptions. This approach facilitates a rich, detailed understanding, gaining a clearer insight into the subject being explored. This approach is fitting to gain an in-depth understanding of how teachers view and employ storytime for emotion regulation purposes

in their classrooms. To collect data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with preschool/pre-kindergarten/kindergarten teachers who use storytime in their classrooms. The interview data were organized, analyzed, and coded to identify common themes as they related to the research questions. Also, this study employed emotional coding qualitative analytical techniques to examine stories mentioned by teachers during the interviews. Emotional coding involves identifying the emotions expressed in a story and the sequence in which those emotions appear. Emotional coding was used as an analytic approach to examine the emotional content of the stories shared by teachers (Saldaña, 2016).

As a preliminary step, a pre-survey was administered to collect initial data regarding the incorporation of storytime into instructional practices and to identify educators for potential participation in the subsequent interview phase. Educators who did not specifically utilize storytime for emotion regulation (as indicated in Question 9 of the survey; see Appendix B) were not selected for the interview phase.

A qualitative approach fits this study because it examines teacher perceptions and practices without manipulating or controlling classroom settings. The data obtained provided a view of how teachers employed storytime for emotion regulation. As Teherani et al. (2015) described, qualitative research applies a constructivist perspective that acknowledges multiple factors that shape individual experiences and beliefs. Environmental and personal differences likely influence teachers' perceptions of using storytime for social-emotional development. The qualitative method allowed the examination of these potential influences.

In summary, a qualitative research design was chosen for its ability to deeply

explore teacher perspectives on storytime as a tool for children's emotion regulation. Semi-structured interviews and emotional coding of the stories teachers mentioned was conducted afterward to determine whether the emotional content of those stories actually aligned with teachers' claims that they used storytime to support children's emotion regulation.

Research Context and Participants

This study aimed to explore preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten teachers' views on how storytime influenced children's ability to manage emotions in the Asir region of Saudi Arabia. The development of emotion regulation skills in early childhood represents a critical foundation for children's overall well-being and long-term success. However, limited research had previously addressed the strategies used by early childhood educators in the Asir region to support emotional regulation in young children.

The research focused on preschool (children aged 3 years), pre-kindergarten (children aged 4 years), and kindergarten (children aged 5 years) teachers from both public and private settings in the Asir region, with the goal of gathering comprehensive insights into how storytime was utilized as a tool for enhancing emotional development. By concentrating specifically on these educators' lived experiences, the study emphasized the importance of their voices in shaping an understanding of storytime's emotional impact.

The selection of the Asir region as the site of this study was intentional, reflecting its unique socio-cultural and geographical characteristics. Asir, known for its mountainous landscapes and rich heritage, offered a combination of urban and rural educational environments. Urban schools tended to have greater access to resources and

modern pedagogical tools, including diverse storytime materials that supported emotional learning. In contrast, rural settings often drew from traditional oral storytelling practices that were deeply embedded in local culture and values.

Participants

The study included seven female early childhood educators working in preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten classrooms across public and private early childhood settings in the Asir region of Saudi Arabia. All participants incorporated storytime into their daily instructional routines. The participants represented a range of teaching experience levels and educational contexts, providing diverse perspectives relevant to the study. It is important to note that these seven teachers participated in the qualitative interview phase of the study, while a larger group of early childhood teachers participated in the pre-survey phase.

The selection criteria aimed to include teachers with different backgrounds and experiences. Participants worked in public and private early childhood schools in both urban and rural areas. They included novice teachers with less than five years of experience and veteran teachers with five or more years of experience.

All participants held a bachelor's degree, aligning with national qualification standards for early childhood teachers in Saudi Arabia. Their professional experience ranged from 3 to 28 years, with some having served in administrative or leadership roles in addition to classroom teaching. This variation allowed the study to examine how teaching experience influenced storytime practices, particularly regarding improvisation, story selection, and emotional responsiveness.

Table 3.1*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Sex	Grade Taught	Degree	Years of Experience
P1	Female	Preschool	Bachelor's ECE	3
P2	Female	Kindergarten	Bachelor's ECE	28 (2 in ECE)
P3	Female	Kindergarten	Bachelor's ECE	5
P4	Female	Preschool	Bachelor's ECE	6
P5	Female	Kindergarten	Bachelor's ECE	7 (12 total, 4-5 in administration)
P6	Female	Pre-Kindergarten	Bachelor's ECE	3
P7	Female	Pre-Kindergarten	Bachelor's ECE	3

Note. ECE = Early Childhood Education. All participants held a bachelor's degree and identified as female.

Although participants worked across various early childhood levels (Preschool, Pre-Kindergarten, and Kindergarten), their professional backgrounds varied significantly. The sample included:

- One highly experienced educator with nearly 30 years in the field (P2),
- Two mid-career teachers with 5–7 years of experience (P3, P4, P5),
- Four early-career teachers with 3 years of experience (P1, P6, P7).

To gain access to teachers, I contacted the Ministry of Education to request permission to contact preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten teachers for this research. After getting approval from the Ministry, I emailed principals at public and private preschools to explain the study's purpose and seek their consent for recruiting

teacher participants from their schools. For interested schools, I asked the principal to forward a recruitment email to their preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten teachers inviting them to participate in the study voluntarily. This email provided details about the research objectives, interview process, informed consent procedures, and measures to maintain confidentiality. Teachers were able to contact me directly if they were interested in participating.

The data collection process began with a pre-survey to gather initial information about teachers' use of storytime in their classrooms, particularly regarding its role in supporting emotional regulation. The pre-survey helped identify potential participants who incorporated storytime for emotional regulation, and teachers were selected for interviews based on their survey responses. This initial step ensured that only relevant participants were chosen for in-depth interviews, allowing for a more focused exploration of their experiences. A total of 101 early childhood teachers responded to the pre-survey. Of these respondents, 59 teachers met the study's eligibility criteria by reporting that they used storytime to support children's emotion regulation, in addition to teaching in preschool, pre-kindergarten, or kindergarten settings, holding a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, and having at least one year of teaching experience. Among the eligible respondents, seven teachers voluntarily expressed their willingness to participate in follow-up interviews and were therefore included in the interview phase of the study. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Instrument

The semi-structured interview guide included open-ended questions about the use of storytime to support emotional regulation (see Appendix C). Since Arabic was the

primary language spoken in Saudi Arabia, I conducted the teacher interviews entirely in Arabic to ensure participants could express themselves comfortably and clearly in their native language. With permission, I audio recorded each interview, then transcribed in Arabic. After completing the Arabic transcriptions, I personally translated them into English while preserving the original meaning as closely as possible. The translated English transcripts were reviewed against the original Arabic recordings and transcripts to check accuracy and resolve any discrepancies. I coded and analyzed the English transcripts using qualitative data analysis software (Dedoose).

This process facilitated collecting rich qualitative Arabic data during interviews while producing analyzed English transcripts to make the study accessible to a broader scholarly audience. Referencing the Arabic transcripts throughout helped validate the analysis and preserve cultural meanings that were relevant to Saudi teachers' perspectives. The data were collected in in-person meetings with the local teachers' participants or via Zoom. The participants were seven teachers. I contacted local schools by mail to request permission to interview teachers and met with interested participants to explain the purpose of the study. During the interviews, teachers were asked to name stories they had previously used in their classrooms and believed to be effective in supporting children's emotion regulation.

Although teachers might have mentioned multiple stories, I only coded the first story they mentioned. I translated the stories from Arabic to English and after that, I followed the emotional coding scheme theme to analyze the content of the stories (Saldaña, 2016). Data from the stories were integrated with the interview findings to create a full understanding of how teachers used storytelling to facilitate emotion

regulation. This comprehensive dataset allowed for a deeper exploration of the role of storytime in emotional regulation.

Procedures for Data Collection

Data collection commenced in one month and lasted six months. Each interview was scheduled at the teacher's convenience and lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Sequence of Activities:

Data Collection

- Step 1: Obtained approval from the Ministry of Education and school administrators.
- Step 2: Distributed recruitment emails to preschool teachers.
- Step 3: Conducted a pre-survey to gather initial insights and select participants.
- Step 4: Scheduled and conducted semi-structured interviews via Zoom or in-person, lasting approximately 60 minutes.
- Step 5: Recorded and transcribed interviews in Arabic for thematic analysis.
- Step 6: Translated Arabic transcriptions into English while preserving the original meaning.
- Step 7: Reviewed the translated English transcripts against the original Arabic recordings to check accuracy and resolve discrepancies.
- Step 8: Coded interview transcripts and analyzed story selection criteria, strategies, and perceived effectiveness of storytime for emotion regulation.

Instrument

This study used three primary instruments for data collection: a pre-survey, a semi-structured interview guide, and an emotional coding scheme for story analysis. Each

instrument was specifically developed or adapted to address the research questions related to teachers' use of storytime to support children's emotion regulation.

Pre-Survey

A brief pre-survey was developed by the researcher to screen potential participants and determine eligibility for the interview phase. The survey consisted of closed-ended questions and short multiple-choice items that gathered information about teachers' teaching level (preschool, pre-kindergarten, or kindergarten), educational qualifications, years of teaching experience, and use of storytime in their classrooms. One key survey item asked teachers whether they used storytime to support children's emotional regulation. Only teachers who met all eligibility criteria and indicated the use of storytime for emotional regulation were invited to participate in the interviews (see Appendix B).

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide was developed by the researcher to explore teachers' perceptions, practices, and experiences related to storytime and emotion regulation. The interview guide included approximately 15 open-ended questions, organized into four sections: (a) storytime practices and emotional regulation, (b) instructional strategies and story selection, (c) challenges and opportunities, and (d) stories used to support emotion regulation. The open-ended format allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences while enabling the researcher to ask follow-up questions for clarification and depth. The interview questions were designed to align directly with the study's research questions and grounded theory methodology (see Appendix C).

Emotional Coding for Stories

Emotional coding can be applied to the stories mentioned by the teachers by categorizing and identifying the emotions or emotional responses depicted in the stories. This analysis helps to understand how the stories are used to promote emotional regulation skills in children, such as happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and other emotions. For example, in the story *Calm Down, Talal*, emotional coding identified a clear sequence of emotions expressed through the main character's actions and reactions. The story begins with anger when the character becomes upset, followed by empathy as another character responds supportively, then self-regulation as Talal learns to calm himself, and finally cooperation as he re-engages positively with others. This sequence (anger → empathy → self-regulation → cooperation) illustrates how emotional transitions were coded and used to verify the emotional content that teachers described during the interviews. This coding approach was informed by Saldaña's (2016) definition of emotion coding, which involves labeling emotions recalled, expressed, or inferred from the data. The emotional codes were used to examine whether the emotional content of the stories aligned with teachers' stated intentions and perceptions discussed during the interviews.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics are presented to summarize demographic characteristics, storytime usage patterns, and the emotional engagement reported by participants. In addition, bivariate analyses were conducted to examine whether variables such as age, education, or experience were associated with the emotional use of storytime. Survey

data were analyzed using SPSS software to generate descriptive statistics that informed participant selection. The pre-survey aimed to identify early childhood teachers who use storytime as a tool to support children's emotion regulation. As noted by Noels (2018), SPSS is a widely used statistical software in education and social sciences and was employed in this study to ensure objective and systematic analysis of the screening responses. In addition to identifying teachers who used storytime for emotional regulation, other pre-survey responses were also utilized to support participant selection and contextualize the sample. Questions about teachers' current teaching level, educational qualifications, and years of experience were used to confirm that respondents met the study's eligibility criteria. These items helped ensure that all selected participants were early childhood educators who held the required qualification, were currently teaching preschool, pre-kindergarten, or kindergarten, and had at least one year of experience. Together, these responses allowed SPSS to be used not only to identify teachers who used storytime for emotional regulation but also to verify that they met all other inclusion criteria.

Qualitative Data Analysis

To explore Saudi early childhood teachers' perceptions of storytime and its role in emotional regulation, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The transcripts of these interviews were analyzed using Dedoose software in alignment with grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014). This methodological choice facilitated the emergence of themes from data rather than from preconceived hypotheses. For example, during open coding, several teachers described using stories to calm children or redirect their behavior, with statements such as "I use the story when a child

gets upset” and “the story helps them regulate their emotions before we continue the activity.” These initial codes were grouped during focused coding into a broader category labeled “Using Stories to Guide Emotional Responses.” This category later contributed to the development of the overarching theme “Storytime as a Tool for Emotion Regulation.”

Steps of Analysis

1. Familiarization and Initial Coding:

Each transcript was carefully reviewed multiple times to ensure deep familiarity with the data. Using Dedoose, open coding was conducted line-by-line to identify phrases and actions related to emotional regulation, storytime practices, pedagogical strategies, and contextual factors. Codes were inductively generated to reflect participant language and meaning (Saldaña, 2016). For example, if a teacher stated, “I use the story when a child becomes upset to help them calm down,” this line was initially coded as “using story to calm child,” “supporting emotional regulation,” and “behavior redirection through storytime.”. Similarly, a statement such as “Sometimes I choose the story based on what happened in class that day” was coded as “spontaneous story selection,” “responding to classroom context,” and “teacher-driven decision-making.”

2. Code Refinement and Categorization:

After initial coding, similar codes were merged, broad codes were split into specific subcategories, and terms were adjusted for clarity. This iterative process ensured the coding system was logically structured and accurately captured participants' insights.

3. Theme Development:

Codes were then organized into overarching themes that revealed recurring patterns across interviews. This process aligns with Creswell and Guetterman’s (2019)

guidance on grouping related codes into higher-level categories. Examples include:

"Storytime as Emotional Support," "Story Selection Criteria," and "Teacher

Improvisation and Responsiveness"

These themes formed the foundation of the theoretical model, which was developed to directly address the main research question. In this study, the theoretical model provides a clear explanation of how the themes connect to show how teachers use storytime to support children's emotion regulation in Saudi early childhood classrooms.

Table 3.2

Themes, Codes, and Representative Quotes

Theme	Code	Illustrative Quote	Participant
Role of Storytime in Emotional Development	Promoting Positive Behaviors	"I use it every day and link it to behavior correction or value reinforcement."	P4
	Encouraging Expression	"The story encourages them to reflect on their emotions and learn how to manage them."	P1
Strategies for Supporting Regulation	Imaginative Engagement	"We create a story around imagined situations."	P2
	Use of Visuals	"I use dolls, finger puppets, pictures, and small models to explain the story."	P6
Story Selection Criteria	Developmental Relevance	"It must be appropriate for their level and engaging."	P3
	Social Relevance	"If something happens in the class, I tell a story that fits the moment."	P5
Curriculum Constraints and Opportunities	Curriculum-Aligned Stories	"The curriculum sometimes limits freedom to choose stories."	P2
	Restricted Choice	"I sometimes cannot choose a story freely because of the curriculum."	P7

Theme	Code	Illustrative Quote	Participant
Teacher Experience and Judgment	Professional Experience	“I decide on the spot which story fits the moment.”	P2
	Improviseational Skills	“Sometimes I design digital stories on the spot to address challenges.”	P3
Measuring Impact	Observational Assessment	“After the story, they became more cooperative and calm.”	P2
	Student Response	“After storytelling, they understand better and become more interactive.”	P7

4. Emotional Coding of Teacher-Shared Stories

In parallel to thematic coding, emotional coding was conducted on the stories shared by participants during the interviews. This involved identifying explicit or inferred emotions such as anger, sadness, empathy, joy, and safety. According to Saldaña (2016, p. 105), emotional codes are defined as labels of the emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant or inferred by the researcher.

Teachers were asked during the interviews to provide the titles of the stories they used in their classrooms to support children's emotional development. Only the first story mentioned by each teacher was coded. These stories were translated and interpreted for emotional sequences (e.g., Anger → Empathy → Cooperation) and were analyzed using Saldaña’s (2016) emotional coding framework.

To support this process, I utilized AI software, specifically ChatGPT, to assist in identifying emotional themes embedded in the story content. Since the stories were publicly available and not confidential, AI assistance was used responsibly and transparently. Dedoose remained the primary platform for qualitative analysis, ensuring rigor, transparency, and consistency throughout the coding process.

The use of emotional coding provided a structured and systematic approach to analyzing qualitative data and offered insights into how the stories used by teachers might influence children's emotional development (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I examined parts of each story that directly addressed emotional skills or indirectly encouraged emotional understanding and regulation. Special attention was given to the teachers' interpretations of the stories and their perceived impact on children's ability to handle emotions. This comparison allowed me to assess whether the emotional themes found in the stories aligned with the teachers' stated intentions and beliefs.

The analysis also aimed to evaluate how accurately teachers understood the emotional impact of their stories. By examining both the emotional content embedded in the stories and what teachers said about using them, I aimed to determine if their beliefs about the emotional benefits of storytelling were supported by the actual emotional themes present in those stories.

Table 3.3 presents a summary of the emotional sequences identified in the analyzed stories and their alignment with teacher practices and insights.

Table 3.3

Summary of Emotional Sequences

Story Title	Key Emotions Coded	Teacher(s)	Aligned Insights / Practices
Calm Down, Talal	Anger → Empathy → Self-Regulation → Cooperation	Teacher 3, Teacher 4	Responsive storytelling; spontaneous emotional support
Little Red	Fear → Caution → Relief	Teacher 6	Emotional reflection; building

Story Title	Key Emotions Coded	Teacher(s)	Aligned Insights / Practices
Riding Hood			awareness of fear and safety
The Secret s of Friendship	Pride → Loneliness → Empathy → Happiness	Teacher 2	Teaching empathy; promoting moral and social values
Don't Touch Me	Safety Awareness → Self-Assertion → Empowerment	Teacher 7	Teaching body autonomy; reinforcing personal boundaries
Unna med Story (T1)	Anger → Reflection → Sadness → Understanding → Compassion	Teacher 1	Guided emotional conversation ; peer empathy development

Table 3.3 is designed to see whether the emotional content of the stories aligns with what teachers reported during the interviews. The emotional sequences extracted from each story (e.g., Anger → Empathy → Cooperation) were compared with the teachers' stated goals for using that story, such as promoting empathy, supporting emotional control, or encouraging cooperative behavior. For example, in Calm Down, Talal (used by P3 and P4), the emotional progression closely matched the teachers' stated intention to use the story to teach empathy and self-regulation. By pairing each story's emotional sequence with the teachers' described practices, the table shows how their beliefs and intentions were reflected in the emotional themes embedded in the stories they selected. This connection clarifies the alignment and supports a deeper

understanding of how storytime functions as a tool for emotional learning in their classrooms

5. Triangulation and Theoretical Development:

To enhance the trustworthiness and depth of the findings, a triangulation approach was used across the three data sources: the pre-survey, the interviews, and the emotional coding of the stories. Each source contributed a different piece of information the pre-survey identified which teachers reported using storytime for emotional regulation, the interviews provided deeper explanations of their intentions and practices, and the emotional coding revealed the actual emotional content of the stories they selected. Together, these three sources offered a clearer overall picture of how teachers use storytime to support children's emotional development by comparing themes derived from the interviews with the emotional codes extracted from the stories shared by teachers. This integrative approach allowed the study to examine whether teachers' stated intentions and perceptions were reflected in the actual emotional content of the stories they used in their classrooms. For example, in the story *Calm Down*, Talal (used by P3 and P4), the emotional progression identified—Anger → Empathy → Self-Regulation → Cooperation—closely aligned with the teachers' stated goals of using stories to promote empathy, emotional control, and cooperative behaviors. Such alignment provided evidence that the teachers' beliefs about the emotional benefits of storytime were supported by the actual structure and themes of the stories they implemented. To illustrate this triangulation process, Table 3.2 presents the thematic insights gathered from the interviews, including associated codes, illustrative quotes, and the corresponding participants. These insights were then compared to the emotional themes

identified in Table 3.3, which outlines the emotional coding of the actual stories.

Together, these tables allowed for a systematic comparison between what teachers say they aim to achieve through storytelling and what their selected stories actually convey emotionally.

This triangulation not only confirmed the emotional relevance of the selected stories but also strengthened the theoretical foundation of the study by linking practice (what teachers say and do) to the actual emotional constructs embedded in the materials they use. Table 3.4 provides additional illustrative quotes that support this triangulation process.

Table 3.4

Additional Illustrative Quotes Supporting the Triangulation Process

Theme	Code	Illustrative Quote	Participant
Role of Storytime in Emotional Development Strategies for Supporting Emotion Regulation	Promoting Positive Behaviors	"I use it every day and link it to behavior correction or value reinforcement."	P4
Story Selection and Emotional Relevance	Imaginative Engagement	"I ask children to imagine certain situations and then we create a story around them."	P2
Curriculum Constraints and Opportunities	Age-Appropriate Story Selection	"The story must be engaging and appropriate for their developmental level."	P3
Teacher Experience and Professional Judgment	Curriculum-Aligned Stories	"Sometimes the curriculum restricts freedom to choose stories."	P2
Impact and Assessment of Storytime	Teacher Experience	"I decide on the spot which story best fits the situation."	P2
	Observations	"After the story, I noticed students became more focused on positive behaviors."	P2

Use of AI Tools for Support

Since most of the stories used in this study are publicly available and not confidential, ChatGPT was employed as a supportive tool to assist with emotional coding by helping to identify embedded emotional themes within the story content. Dedoose remained the primary platform for qualitative analysis, ensuring rigor, transparency, and consistency throughout the coding process.

Ethical Considerations

This research study followed the ethical standards to protect the rights and well-being of all participants. Before data collection, approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Oakland University. The IRB process ensured that the study adhered to ethical principles and federal regulations regarding human subject research.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all preschool teacher participants before their involvement. They received a consent form clearly explaining the purpose of the study, what their participation entailed, the voluntary nature of participation, and their ability to withdraw at any time without consequences. The consent form also outlined measures to protect confidentiality.

Confidentiality

Maintaining participant confidentiality was an important consideration. All data were de-identified, with participants assigned pseudonyms or codes to protect their identities. Only the researcher had access to identifiable information, which was stored

securely and separately from study data. Any reporting of findings was done in total form with no individual identities revealed.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. The small number of participants may have limited how well the findings apply to a wider group. Since the study focused only on the Asir region, the results might not fully reflect other areas. There may also have been challenges with translation, as some cultural and language meanings could have been lost even with careful checks.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Overview

In this chapter, I will present the findings of the research study that explored Saudi teachers' perceptions of the role of storytime in children's emotional regulation. Using grounded theory methodology, I will provide a detailed thematic analysis supported by direct quotes, coded data, tables, and a visual model to explain Saudi teachers' perceptions of the role of Storytime in children's emotional regulation.

The themes and insights presented emerged directly from the teachers' accounts, offering a grounded understanding of how storytime is used to support emotional development in early childhood classrooms.

Quantitative Results

This section presents the results of the pre-survey distributed to early childhood teachers. The primary aim of this survey was to identify teachers who use storytime in their classrooms, particularly for emotional or affective purposes, in order to select appropriate participants for follow-up qualitative interviews.

Clarification of Survey and Interview Samples

This study employed a two-phase design consisting of a pre-survey followed by qualitative interviews. In the first phase, a total of 101 early childhood teachers completed the pre-survey, which was used to describe general storytime practices and to identify teachers who reported using storytime to support children's emotional regulation. Although the majority of survey respondents (97%) reported using storytime in their

classrooms, only 59 teachers (58%) indicated that they used storytime specifically to support emotional regulation.

Seven teachers volunteered to participate in in-depth interviews. These seven teachers constitute the study participants for the qualitative analysis, while the survey data ($N = 101$) are reported to provide contextual and descriptive background

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants

The survey sample consisted of 101 early childhood teachers. As presented in Table 4.1, the majority of participants were aged 31–40 years (43%), followed by those aged 21–30 years (30%), 41–50 years (25%), and above 51 years (3%). In terms of educational attainment, most teachers held a bachelor’s degree (77%), while 18% had a master’s degree, and only a few held a doctorate (1%) or other qualifications (4%). Regarding teaching experience, (52%) of the participants had less than five years of experience, whereas 21% reported 6–10 years, 18% had 11–15 years, and 9% had over 16 years of experience. As for teaching level, the majority (60%) worked with kindergarten children aged 5–6 years, followed by 24% who taught preschool-aged children 4–5 years, 7% who taught 3–4 years, and 9% who taught mixed-age groups.

Table 4.1.

Demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants (N=101)

Characteristic	Category	Count	Percentage
Age	21–30	30	30%
	31–40	43	43%
	41–50	25	25%
	51+	3	3%
Education	Bachelor	78	77%
	Master	18	18%

Characteristic	Category	Count	Percentage
Experience	Doctorate	1	1%
	Others	4	4%
	0–5	53	52%
	6–10	21	21%
	11–15	18	18%
	16+	9	9%
Teaching Level	KG 5 to 6	61	60%
	Preschool 4 to 5	24	24%
	Preschool 3 to 4	7	7%
	Mixed	9	9%

Regarding storytime practices (Table 4.2), almost all teachers (97%) reported using storytime in their classrooms, while only a small proportion (3%) did not. In terms of frequency, half of the participants (50%) conducted storytime sessions two to three times per week. Additionally, 29% reported conducting storytime daily, 9% once per week, 8% less than once per week, and 5% reported using storytime rarely. In a separate survey question about using storytime specifically to support children’s emotional regulation, 58% of teachers indicated that they did so regularly, 34% reported occasional use, and 8% reported no such use (see Appendix B for full survey items).

Table 4.2

Storytime Use, Frequency, and Emotional Engagement Among Participants (N = 101)

Characteristic	Category	Count	Percentage
Storytime Use	Yes	98	97%
	No	3	3%
Storytime Frequency	Daily	29	29%
	2 to 3x weekly	50	50%
	Once a week	9	9%
	Less than 1x per week	8	8%

Characteristic	Category	Count	Percentage
Support children's emotional regulation through storytime	Rarely	5	5%
	Yes	59	58%
	Sometimes	34	34%
	No	8	8%

Bivariate Analysis of Emotional Use of Storytime

To examine potential associations between teacher characteristics and the emotional use of storytime (referred to as *storytime private use*), Chi-square tests of independence were conducted. The results are summarized below and detailed in Table 4.3.

Association Between Age and Storytime Private Use

A Chi-square test was used to assess the relationship between participants' age group and their emotional use of storytime, referred to in this study as storytime private use, defined as teachers' self-reported use of storytime specifically to support children's emotional regulation rather than for general literacy or instructional purposes. The test indicated no statistically significant association between age and storytime private use, $\chi^2(12, N = 101) = 5.38, p = .944$. The effect size, as measured by Cramér's V, was 0.067, indicating a negligible association. This suggests that emotional engagement with storytime was consistently reported across different age groups. To visually explore this association, a bar chart was constructed to illustrate the distribution of private storytime use across age groups (Figure 4.1).

Association Between Education Level and Storytime Private Use

Analysis of the relationship between education level and storytime private use also revealed no statistically significant association, $\chi^2(12, N = 101) = 18.90, p = .091$. While the p-value approached conventional thresholds of significance, the corresponding Cramér's V value of 0.125 indicates a weak association. This implies that variations in educational attainment were not meaningfully linked to differences in emotional storytime use. To visually explore this association, a bar chart was constructed to illustrate the distribution of private storytime use across education levels (Figure 4.2).

Association Between Teaching Experience and Storytime Private Use

The Chi-square test examining teaching experience and emotional use of storytime likewise showed no significant association, $\chi^2(12, N = 101) = 7.85, p = .797$. The effect size (Cramér's V = 0.080) further supports the absence of a meaningful relationship. This suggests that emotional use of storytime was a common practice regardless of teachers' years of experience. To visually explore this association, a bar chart was constructed to illustrate the distribution of private storytime with teaching experience (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.1

Storytime Private Use by Age

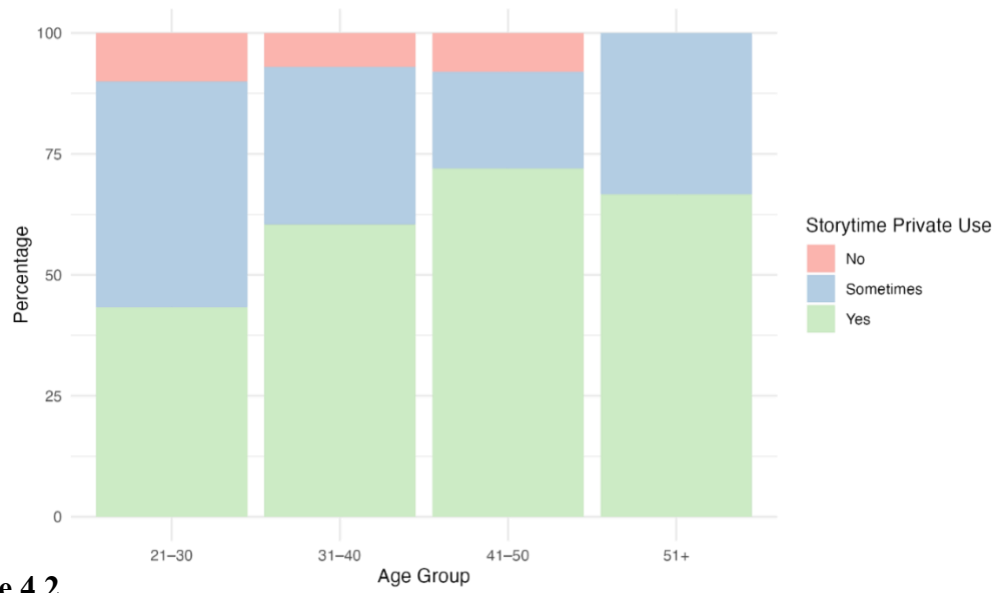


Figure 4.2

Education Level

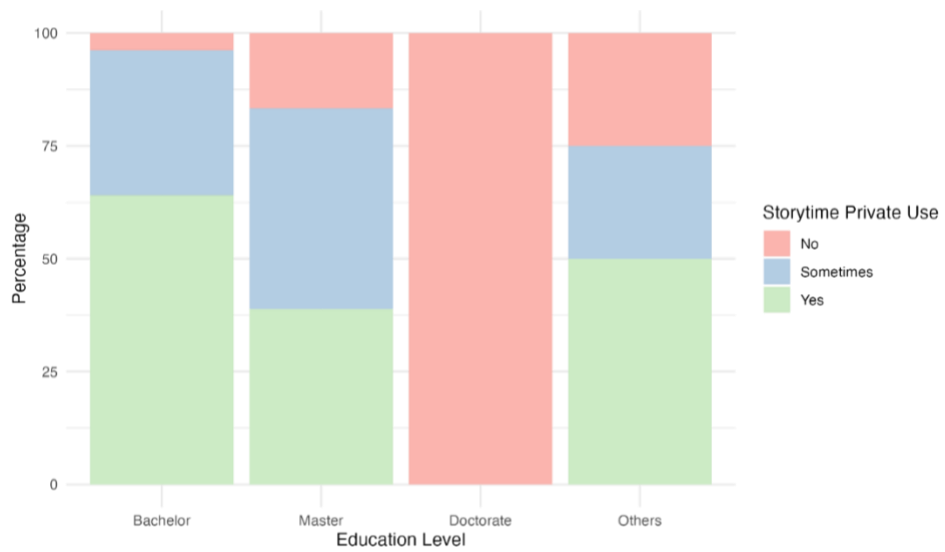


Figure 4.3

Years of Experience

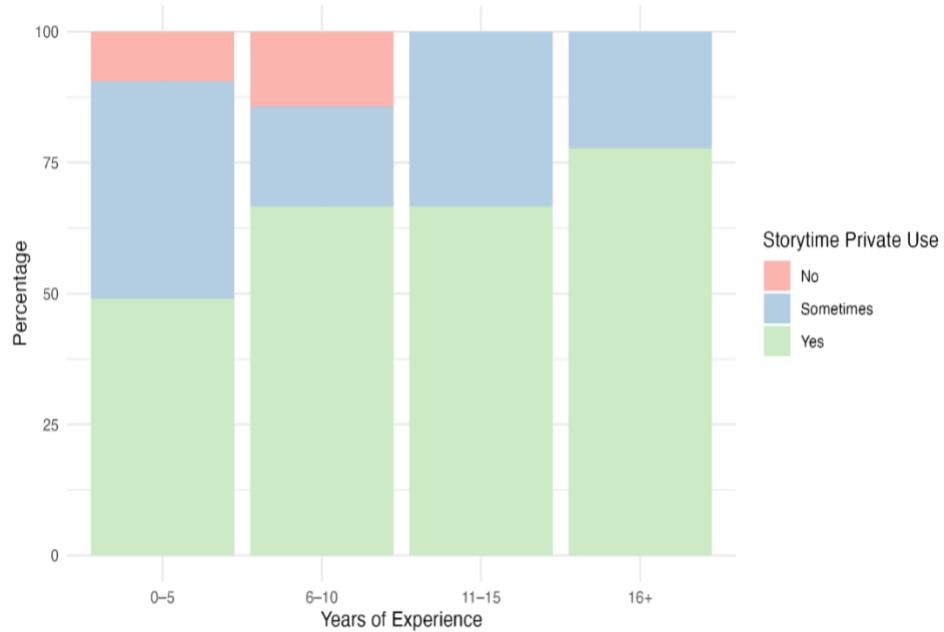


Table 4.3

Chi-Square Tests of Association Between Teacher Characteristics and Storytime Private Use

Variable	χ^2	Df	p-value	Significant	Cramer's V
Age Group	5.38	12	.944	No	0.067
Education Level	18.90	12	.091	No	0.125
Experience	7.85	12	.797	No	0.08

The absence of statistically significant results across all tested variables indicates that emotional use of storytime was uniformly practiced among early childhood educators in the study. Despite minor variations in effect sizes, no demographic or

professional characteristic emerged as a strong predictor of emotional storytime use. These findings suggest that such practices may be deeply embedded in shared pedagogical approaches or influenced by curriculum-wide expectations that transcend individual teacher profiles.

Qualitative Data Results

The initial pre-survey provided demographic context and screened participants based on their reported use of storytime for emotional regulation. Of the 59 teachers who reported such use, **only** seven agreed to participate in follow-up interviews and provided their contact information in the survey. These seven teachers therefore constituted the full qualitative interview sample. All interview participants were female teachers holding bachelor's degrees in early childhood education, with teaching experience ranging from 3 to 28 years (see Table 3.1 for full demographic details).

Major Themes

Thematic analysis of the teachers' responses using Dedoose revealed several key themes related to the role of storytime in emotional regulation and early childhood education. These themes include:

1. Storytime as a core strategy for enhancing emotion regulation.
2. Promoting positive behaviors and moral values through storytime.
3. Cognitive, language, and social skills development through storytime.
4. Intentional and contextualized story selection.
5. Barriers to integrating storytime in the curriculum.
6. The influence of teacher experience and improvisation.

These themes were developed through a systematic coding process. First, transcripts were reviewed and open-coded to identify relevant ideas and practices. Then, similar codes were grouped and refined to form broader categories. In the final stage, recurring patterns were synthesized into major themes that reflect the teachers' shared perceptions. Emotional coding was also applied to the stories mentioned by teachers to examine emotional sequences and their alignment with the teachers' goals for storytime, particularly in supporting children's emotional regulation. In the final stage, recurring patterns across these categories were examined and integrated into major themes that captured teachers' shared perceptions and practices. A detailed list of the initial codes, categories, and their alignment with the final themes is provided in Appendix F.

The table below shows how each research question is connected to the main themes found in the study. This helps explain how the questions guided the analysis and how the themes reflect what teachers shared about the role of storytime in children's emotional regulation.

Table 4.4 shows how each research question is connected to the main themes found in the study. This helps explain how the questions guided the analysis and how the themes reflect what teachers shared about the role of storytime in children's emotional regulation.

Table 4.4

Alignment of Research Questions with Emergent Themes from Thematic and Emotional Coding

Research Question	Related Themes
What are early childhood teachers' (preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten) perceptions of the role of	1. Storytime as a core strategy for enhancing emotion regulation

Research Question	Related Themes
classroom storytime in supporting children's development of emotion regulation in the Asir region of Saudi Arabia?	2. Promoting positive behaviors and moral values through Storytime
What are the strategies employed by preschool teachers during storytime to enhance children's emotion regulation?	1. Storytime as a core strategy for enhancing emotion regulation 6. Influence of teacher experience and improvisation
How do the professional experience, level of education, and age of preschool teachers shape their perceptions and strategies regarding storytime for emotion regulation?	6. Influence of teacher experience and improvisation
What selection of stories do preschool teachers prefer for facilitating emotional regulation, and what criteria inform these choices?	4. Intentional and contextualized story selection 2. Promoting positive behaviors and moral values
What challenges and opportunities do preschool teachers identify in integrating storytime aimed at emotion regulation into the preschool curriculum?	5. Barriers to integrating storytime in the curriculum
How do teachers assess the effectiveness of storytime sessions in achieving emotional regulation outcomes in preschoolers?	1. Storytime as a core strategy for enhancing emotion regulation 3. Cognitive, language, and social skills development
What professional development resources or support do teachers seek or recommend for effectively using storytime as a tool for emotion regulation?	6. Influence of teacher experience and improvisation 5. Barriers to integrating storytime in the curriculum

Note: This table illustrates how each research question is linked to the emergent themes identified through thematic analysis, helping clarify the alignment between teacher insights and the study's analytical framework.

1. Storytime as a Core Strategy for Enhancing Emotion Regulation

The analysis showed that, according to the participating teachers, storytime plays a key role in helping children understand and manage their emotions. Teachers often described storytime as a gentle but effective way to guide children through emotional experiences in a safe and structured environment. Appendix F presents the main categories that emerged from the data analysis, including storytime as emotional support,

learning emotions through story characters, and storytime as a calm and structured activity. The quotes in this section reflect these categories by illustrating how teachers intentionally use storytime to help children understand emotions, connect emotionally with characters, and experience a sense of calm and safety during classroom activities. This alignment demonstrates how teachers' lived experiences informed the analytic categories summarized in Appendix F. For example, Teacher 2 shared, "The story encourages them to reflect on their emotions and learn how to manage them" (Quote 4, see Appendix F, Table F1). Teacher 4 explained how one child who had trouble with anger was able to connect with a story character and learn to calm down (Quote 5, see Appendix F, Table F1). Similarly, Teacher 5 said, "Story time is more structured and calmer," which helps children not only with emotions but also with language development and positive behavior (Quote 17, see Appendix F, Table F1). Some teachers found that storytime helped children open up about their feelings. For instance, Teacher 5 recalled a child who spoke about being separated from a parent only after hearing a related story (Quote 19, see Appendix F, Table F1). Others used storytime to help children with behavior problems or as a calming activity. Teacher 6 mentioned a hyperactive child who would ask for storytime when feeling tense as a way to relax (Quote 27, see Appendix F, Table F1). Teachers also used tools like music, drawings, and visuals to strengthen emotional learning. Teacher 3 described how turning children's drawings into animated stories helped make emotions more visible (Quotes 12–13, see Appendix F, Table F1). Teacher 7 focused on how stories build emotional vocabulary, especially for children who struggle to name their feelings (Quotes 31–32, see Appendix F, Table F1). Storytime was used both reactively to handle a specific emotional situation

and proactively to support emotional growth over time. Teacher 1 shared, “Every day after the opening activities, I integrate a story that targets emotional reflection” (Quote 15, see Appendix F, Table F1). Teacher 6 also used finger puppets, pictures, and models to make the stories more engaging and emotional (Quote 23, see Appendix F, Table F1). She found that music and movement made storytime even more effective (Quotes 26, 28, see Appendix F, Table F1). Overall, based on the teachers’ perspectives, storytime became a rich, multisensory experience that helped children connect emotionally. The use of stories to support emotional development was consistent across all participants. Teacher 1 shows strong agreement on its value in helping children grow emotionally and regulate their feelings.

In addition to what teachers shared during interviews, emotional coding of the first book each teacher reported using in their classrooms confirmed the role of storytime in helping children process and regulate emotions, by following Saldaña’s (2016) definition. Each story was reviewed to label key emotions, note their sequence, and link them to teachers’ opinions that were reported in interviews. Table 4.7 summarizes these emotions. For instance, in the story Calm Down, Talal (لا تغضب يا طلال) referenced by Teachers 3 and 4 emotional progression moves from anger to empathy, then toward self-regulation and finally cooperation. This mirrors Teacher 4’s observation that some children “relate to the story character and learn how to manage their emotions” (Quote 5, see Appendix F, Table F1), and Teacher 3’s use of digital storytime (Quotes 12–13, see Appendix F, Table F1). Similarly, in Little Red Riding Hood (ليلي والذئب), the coded sequence of fear → caution → relief aligns with Teacher 6’s use of dramatic storytime and music to help children process intense emotions (Quotes 26, 28, see Appendix F,

Table F1). The story The Secrets of Friendship (أسرار الصداقة) revealed a shift from pride and loneliness to empathy and happiness, reflecting the moral goals emphasized by Teacher 2 (Quote 4, see Appendix F, Table F1). In Don't Touch Me (لا تلمسني), the progression from safety awareness to empowerment supports Teacher 7's aim to build children's autonomy and understanding of personal boundaries. Lastly, the unnamed story shared by Teacher 1 showed a transformation from anger to compassion validating her focus on daily emotional scaffolding (Quotes 11, 15, see Appendix F, Table F1). These alignments between emotional codes and teacher insights support the grounded theory that storytime is a powerful, intentional practice for guiding emotional development.

Table 4.5 presents selected illustrative quotes from participants that highlight the emotional functions of storytime. Each quote is categorized under a sub-theme a more specific idea or function within the broader topic and a core category, which reflects the deeper conceptual purpose the quote serves in understanding how storytime supports emotional regulation in early childhood.

Table 4.5

Emotional Coding and Triangulated Teacher Practices

Story Title	Key Emotions Coded	Teacher(s) Referenced	Aligned Practices or Insights
Calm Down, Talal (لا تغضب يا طلال)	Anger → Empathy → Self-Regulation → Cooperation	Teacher 3, Teacher 4	Responsive storytelling, spontaneous emotional support
Little Red Riding Hood (ليلي والذئب)	Fear → Caution → Relief	Teacher 6	Daily emotional reflection, building

The Secrets of Friendship (أسرار الصداقة)	Pride → Loneliness → Empathy → Happiness	Teacher 2	awareness of fear and safety Promoting moral values, using stories to teach empathy and social skills
Don't Touch Me (لا تلمسني)	Safety Awareness → Self-Assertion → Empowerment	Teacher 7	Teaching body autonomy, reinforcing personal boundaries
Unnamed Story create by Teacher 1	Anger → Reflection → Sadness → Understanding → Compassion	Teacher 1	Guided emotional conversation, peer empathy development

2. Promoting Positive Behaviors and Moral Values through Storytime

Storytime was used to address classroom behavior and instill social and moral norms. Teachers employed stories as a strategy to introduce children to concepts of honesty, cooperation, and ethical decision-making. Teacher 2 reflected, “Through it, I can correct children’s behaviors and teach values in a simple and convincing way” (Quote 1, see Appendix F, Table F2). She also added that “storytelling helps correct behaviors and reinforce values like honesty and cooperation” (Quote 2, see Appendix F, Table F2) and that she routinely uses stories to reinforce values like honesty (Quote 3, see Appendix F, Table F2). For example, she described a story about a child learning the importance of truthfulness (Quote 4, see Appendix F, Table F2).

Teacher 4 highlighted that “promoting values like honesty, cooperation, and patience is part of my routine” (Quote 5, see Appendix F, Table F2). In terms of practical strategies, Teacher 1 noted, “If a child hits another, I use puppets to reenact the situation and ask, ‘How does the hurt puppet feel?’” (Quote 6, see Appendix F, Table F2). Teacher

3 integrated cultural practices into storytelling to strengthen social values, explaining: “A story about cooperation during Ramadan encouraged children to help at home” (Quote 7, see Appendix F, Table F2). She also shared how she uses stories to promote kindness and emotional control: “If a child hits a friend, I immediately narrate a story about managing anger and being kind” (Quote 8, see Appendix F, Table F2).

Teacher 4 further emphasized emotional and behavioral development through storytime. She mentioned using a story to help a child who struggled with anger (Quote 9, see Appendix F, Table F2) and that “the story was about how to control anger” (Quote 10, see Appendix F, Table F2). She also uses stories specifically for teaching patience (Quote 11, see Appendix F, Table F2) and described how one child “began to relate to the character in the story and learned how to manage his emotions” (Quote 12, see Appendix F, Table F2).

Teacher 6 highlighted an indirect approach to behavior management: “Sometimes, if a child shows inappropriate behavior, I use a story to guide them indirectly in a way that respects their personality” (Quote 13, see Appendix F, Table F2). Teacher 5 viewed storytime as a “structured and calm” space that helps children gain language, emotional, and behavioral skills (Quote 14, see Appendix F, Table F2). She emphasized, “Stories play a big role and have a strong impact. Children gain behaviors, values, and expanded thinking through them” (Quote 15, see Appendix F, Table F2). She also asks children to retell stories to support emotional expression (Quote 20, see Appendix F, Table F2).

Finally, Teacher 7 noted that “stories help them recognize feelings through characters like ‘Dad is angry’ or ‘Mom is crying’” (Quote 18, see Appendix F, Table F2) and that “when a story includes emotions, children learn new vocabulary and begin

expressing their feelings accurately using those words” (Quote 19, see Appendix F, Table F2). Together, these practices demonstrate how storytime serves as a dynamic tool for shaping positive behavior, teaching values, and supporting emotional development in young children through relatable and engaging stories.

3. Cognitive, Language, and Social Skills Development Through Storytime

Teachers reported that storytime plays a crucial role in enhancing children’s cognitive, language, and social skills. It was commonly used to strengthen listening abilities, expand vocabulary, and simplify abstract academic concepts in a developmentally appropriate manner. Several teachers emphasized its role in social interaction and self-expression through imagination and storytelling.

For instance, Teacher 2 shared, “I often use storytime mid-lesson, especially in science, because some concepts are intangible” (Quote 7, see Appendix F, Table F3), highlighting how stories function as cognitive bridges for abstract content. Similarly, Teacher 4 noted, “I use storytime to improve language skills” (Quote 1, see Appendix F, Table F3) and “I use it to enrich children’s vocabulary” (Quote 2, see Appendix F, Table F3), demonstrating storytime’s role in fostering language acquisition. Teacher 4 also reported that storytime “helps develop listening and concentration skills” (Quote 3, see Appendix F, Table F3), showing its contribution to attentive learning, and that she chooses stories that feature characters children already love (Quote 10, see Appendix F, Table F3) to increase motivation.

Beyond linguistic gains, teachers observed benefits in focus and engagement. Teacher 1 observed, “Children who struggled with focus sat still during storytime” (Quote 11, see Appendix F, Table F3), and added, “If I have a shy child, I ask them to tell

the story after reading, helping them engage more” (Quote 13, see Appendix F, Table F3). Teacher 1 also described pausing letter lessons to prioritize storytelling when it increased engagement (Quote 14, see Appendix F, Table F3).

Teacher 3 explained, “Children created digital stories using Pixton, which boosted their vocabulary and imagination” (Quote 12, see Appendix F, Table F3), and “Children enjoy seeing their own work turned into animated stories, which motivates them and improves language skills” (Quote 15, see Appendix F, Table F3).

Other teachers incorporated multimodal and sensory approaches. Teacher 5 said, “I mostly use picture presentations through a projector... or physical books from the library” (Quote 16, see Appendix F, Table F3), and encouraged children to retell stories in their own words to express their feelings (Quote 17, see Appendix F, Table F3). She also noted that “stories often align with the curriculum and support the topics being taught” (Quote 18, see Appendix F, Table F3).

Teacher 6 emphasized the integration of music “It’s one of the most effective tools, especially when accompanied by music or a song,” (Quote 19, see Appendix F, Table F3) and movement “Movement is one of the most effective methods. I combine storytelling with physical activity,” (Quote 20, see Appendix F, Table F3) to enhance engagement and learning. Teacher 7 highlighted that when a story includes emotions, “children learn new vocabulary and begin expressing their feelings” (Quote 21, see Appendix F, Table F3).

Additionally, teachers structured storytime into their daily routines. Teacher 4 emphasized, “There must be a story after the opening activities every day” (Quote 8, see Appendix F, Table F3), and “The story must be appropriate for preschool age” (Quote 9,

see Appendix F, Table F3). Teacher 2 also described using visual aids and scenes to reinforce the message of a story (Quote 5, see Appendix F, Table F3) and encouraging children to imagine situations and create stories around them (Quote 4, see Appendix F, Table F3), fostering creativity and higher-order thinking.

Altogether, storytime is not only engaging but also a strategic and multifaceted practice that scaffolds children's cognitive growth, language development, and social-emotional expression through varied instructional strategies and integration with the curriculum

4. Intentional and Contextualized Story Selection

The findings revealed that teachers engage in purposeful selection of stories based on the emotional, behavioral, and developmental needs of their students. Several teachers indicated that they choose stories that align with lesson objectives, classroom dynamics, or real-life events. This intentional approach ensures that Storytime is developmentally meaningful and contextually relevant.

Teachers shared a variety of approaches to selecting stories. Teacher 2 emphasized the importance of aligning stories with children's needs and values: “The most important things I consider are the children's needs and the values I want to instill. I also make sure the story encourages them to reflect on their emotions and learn how to manage them” (Quote 5, see Appendix F, Table F4). She also selects stories based on real-time classroom situations (Quote 2, see Appendix F, Table F4) and sometimes creates or adapts stories on the spot based on her experience.

Teacher 4 noted she chooses stories that match developmental goals (Quote 9, see Appendix F, Table F4), are suitable for preschoolers' age and language level (Quotes 11–

12, see Appendix F, Table F4), and respond to classroom incidents such as the need for cooperation or anger management (Quote 10, see Appendix F, Table F4). Similarly, Teacher 1 stated that she creates stories and acts them out using puppets (Quote 1, see Appendix F, Table F4), while Teacher 3 described using stories to support emotional transitions at the start of the year (Quote 6, see Appendix F, Table F4) and to align with curricular units or inquiry-based learning.

These examples illustrate how teachers thoughtfully tailor their storytime choices to support emotional regulation and social-emotional development, reflecting their perceptions and teaching strategies. to support emotional growth, address behavioral needs, and reinforce learning objectives.

During the interviews, teachers consistently emphasized a range of emotions they aim to address through storytime. The most frequently mentioned emotion was anger, cited by nearly all teachers, highlighting its significance in classroom behavior management. Sadness also appeared frequently, often in relation to children's separation from parents or feelings of anxiety. Appendix F, Table F5 summarizes the specific emotions mentioned by each teacher and how often they were referenced. Table 4.6 summarizes the specific emotions mentioned by each teacher and how often they were referenced

Table 4.6

Summary of Emotions Mentioned by Each Teacher in the Interview

Teacher	Emotion Emphasized	Count
Teacher 1	Anger	2
Teacher 1	Empathy	1

Teacher	Emotion Emphasized	Count
Teacher 2	Anger	3
Teacher 2	Sadness	2
Teacher 3	Anger	1
Teacher 3	Happiness	1
Teacher 4	Anger	1
Teacher 4	Patience	1
Teacher 5	Sadness (child missing parent)	1
Teacher 6	Anger/Aggression	1
Teacher 6	Anxiety/Stress (“tense”)	1
Teacher 6	Happiness/Joy	1
Teacher 7	Anger	1
Teacher 7	Sadness	1

The data demonstrate that anger was the most frequently addressed emotion, suggesting its centrality in both behavioral management and emotional education.

Teachers 1 through 4 and Teachers 6 and 7 all cited anger explicitly. Sadness was also frequently mentioned, particularly by Teachers 2, 5, and 7, in contexts such as separation anxiety. Teachers 1 and 2 incorporated empathy and emotional reflection, indicating attention to both regulation and interpersonal understanding.

Teacher 6 displayed the broadest emotional range, referencing joy, aggression, and stress, which reflects a nuanced understanding of children's emotional worlds. These variations suggest that while some educators prioritize behavioral correction, others emphasize broader emotional development and resilience. Overall, intentional story selection proves to be a multifaceted approach tailored to the evolving emotional and developmental needs of preschoolers.

Integrated Analysis of Stories and Interviews. To better understand how teachers’ interview responses aligned with the stories they shared, the emotional coding

results were compared with the emotions emphasized in their interviews. Appendix F, Table F6 shows that teachers' interview responses and their selected story were closely connected. For some, like Teachers 1, 3, and 4, the connection was direct—anger and empathy appeared both in what they emphasized and in the story they shared. For others, such as Teachers 2, 6, and 7, the emotions mentioned in the interviews complemented the emotions coded in their story, showing how they used storytime to help children move from difficult feelings toward positive outcomes. Overall, this integration confirms that teachers' views on emotion regulation were reinforced through their storytime practices.

5. Barriers to Integrating Storytime in the Curriculum

Although storytime has many benefits, teachers reported several challenges that make it difficult to use regularly in the classroom. These challenges include a strict curriculum, limited time, difficulty using stories in some subjects, and technical problems.

Teacher 2 shared, “The curriculum somewhat restricts the freedom to use stories” (Quote 1, see Appendix F, Table F5). She also mentioned time limits: “Sometimes, a class period is too short for me to use storytelling in a meaningful way” (Quote 2, see Appendix F, Table F5). In science concepts, she had to keep stories short and focused (Quote 3, see Appendix F, Table F5), while in language arts she had more flexibility: “I can use storytelling more extensively” (Quote 4, see Appendix F, Table F5).

Teacher 4 said it is difficult to include stories in all subjects: “It’s hard to fit storytime meaningfully in all content areas” (Quote 5, see Appendix F, Table F5). Even though she tries to make storytime part of the daily schedule, “sometimes it’s skipped” (Quote 6, see Appendix F, Table F5) due to time pressure. She also noted that her school

follows a yearly curriculum with planned goals and themes (Quote 7, see Appendix F, Table F5).

To work around these barriers, teachers shortened stories (Quote 8, see Appendix F, Table F5), adjusted them to fit the subject (Quote 10, see Appendix F, Table F5), and occasionally paused regular lessons to include a story (Quote 11, see Appendix F, Table F5). However, technical issues could still interrupt the flow. For example, Teacher 3 said, “Internet issues sometimes disrupt digital storytelling sessions, causing loss of engagement” (Quote 12, see Appendix F, Table F5).

6. The Influence of Teacher Experience and Improvisation

Teachers emphasized that experience plays a major role in making storytime effective. Many experienced teachers mentioned building a “mental library” of stories that they could quickly use and adjust depending on classroom situations. They also relied on intuition and improvisation, especially during unexpected emotional moments.

Teacher 2 explained: “Over time, I have built a ‘mental library’ of stories to correct behaviors and instill values” (Quote 4, see Appendix F, Table F6), and added, “Sometimes, I decide on the spot which story best fits the situation” (Quote 5, see Appendix F, Table F6). Teacher 4 highlighted her ability to respond to children's emotions, saying, “I adapt stories based on children’s reactions and emotional state” (Quote 6, see Appendix F, Table F6) and “Many stories I use come from incidents that happened just before the storytime session” (Quote 10, see Appendix F, Table F6).

Teacher 1 talked about creating personalized stories: “If I can't find a suitable story, I write one quickly based on what happened in class” (Quote 14, see Appendix F, Table F6). Meanwhile, Teacher 3 shared how she uses technology creatively: “I create animated

stories using children's drawings, sometimes on the spot, to immediately address emotional needs" (Quote 15, see Appendix F, Table F6).

However, integrating storytime into the curriculum wasn't always easy. Some teachers saw it as a helpful tool that supports the curriculum. For instance, Teacher 5 said, "Stories often align with the curriculum and support the topics being taught" (Quote 1, see Appendix F, Table F6).

On the other hand, others faced clear difficulties. Teacher 6 noted, "The curriculum assigns a time for read-aloud sessions, which are different from story time. Read-alouds can be boring for children because they lack expression and interaction" (Quote 2, see Appendix F, Table F6). Teacher 7 pointed out how storytime tends to be pushed to the end of the day: "Story time usually ends the class session" (Quote 3, see Appendix F, Table F6), which may reduce its importance.

Additionally, some teachers faced technical problems or struggled to keep children engaged during storytime. These insights show that while teachers value storytime for emotional and behavioral development, they often need to overcome challenges related to time, curriculum demands, and classroom dynamics to use it effectively.

From Themes to Theory Model (Discussion)

Drawing together the themes identified in this study, I propose the Scaffolded Emotional-Moral Experience Model. This grounded theory model, built on the analyzed themes, explains Saudi early childhood teachers' perceptions of the role of classroom storytime in supporting children's emotion regulation. The model directly addresses the main research question by showing how teachers intentionally and flexibly use stories as

tools for naming emotions, practicing regulation strategies, and internalizing socio-moral values.

Mapping of Themes to the Emerging Grounded Theory Model

As shown in Table 4.15, each theme aligns with one or more components of the grounded theory model, demonstrating how teachers' perceptions and practices collectively form the Scaffolded Emotional-Moral Experience Model.

Summary of the Model

This process, consistent with the Scaffolded Emotional-Moral Experience Model, can be summarized as follows: Classroom Incident → Emotional Response → Story Intervention → Emotional Reflection and Growth.

Table 4.7

Mapping of Themes to the Emerging Grounded Theory Model

Theme	Model Component	Contribution to the Model
Storytime as a Core Strategy for Enhancing Emotion Regulation	Story Intervention	Shows how structured storytime helps children manage their emotions.
Promoting Positive Behaviors and Moral Values through Storytime	Emotional Reflection and Growth	Stories give moral lessons and examples that help Children grow socially and emotionally.
Cognitive, Language, and Social Skills Development through Storytime	Emotional Response / Emotional Reflection and Growth	Storytime builds language and thinking skills that help children express and reflect on feelings.
Intentional and Contextualized Story Selection	Story Intervention	Choosing stories on purpose makes sure they fit the children's needs and goals.

Theme	Model Component	Contribution to the Model
Barriers to Integrating Storytime in the Curriculum	Classroom Incident	Challenges in the curriculum act as situations that shape when and how storytime is used.
The Influence of Teacher Experience and Improvisation	Classroom Incident / Story Intervention	Teacher skill and quick thinking affect when storytime happens and how effective it is.

Note. This table illustrates how each emergent theme from the analysis aligns with specific components of the Scaffolded Emotional-Moral Experience Model, showing the integrated process of storytime in supporting children's emotional and social development.

Conclusion

This chapter explored Saudi early childhood teachers' views on the role of storytime in children's emotional regulation. The findings showed that storytime is more than a literacy activity; it is a calm and meaningful space where children learn to recognize, express, and manage feelings such as anger, sadness, and empathy. Teachers used stories to promote positive behavior, teach moral values, and build language and social skills, often adapting stories to match children's needs and classroom situations.

From these themes, the Scaffolded Emotional-Moral Experience Model emerged. This model explains how storytime helps children move from classroom incidents and emotional responses to story based interventions and reflection, supporting both emotional regulation and social growth. Overall, storytime appears as a purposeful, flexible, and culturally meaningful practice through which teachers guide, comfort, and empower children. Chapter Five will discuss this model further in relation to existing theories.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This chapter interprets the grounded theory model of Saudi teachers' perceptions of storytime in children's emotional regulation, integrating our findings with established theories and prior research. The analysis in Chapter Four revealed six core themes: storytime as a strategy for emotional regulation, promotion of prosocial and moral values, cognitive/language/social development, intentional story selection, integration barriers, and the influence of teacher experience. I will discuss each theme in turn, drawing on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, as well as empirical studies by Denham et al. (2003, 2012), Bartan (2020), Betawi (2018), Harper (2016), and Sala and colleagues (2014).

Storytime as a Core Strategy for Enhancing Emotional Regulation

The findings revealed that teachers consistently reported that storytime provides a calm and structured environment where children can safely explore and understand emotions. For example, one teacher said, "storytime is more structured and calmer... which helps children not only with emotions but also with language development and positive behavior." In their classrooms, teachers use stories in two main ways: proactively, to help children build emotional awareness over time, and reactively, to address children's immediate feelings. According to the teachers I interviewed, children often "open up about their feelings" after listening to a story that relates to their experiences. Some children even ask for a story when they feel upset as a way to calm down.

When I analyzed the emotional coding of the stories used by teachers, I noticed clear emotional progressions. For instance, in *Calm Down, Talal*, the emotion moved from anger to empathy to self-regulation. These emotional shifts support the grounded theory I developed, which suggests that storytime works as an intentional emotional scaffold. It helps children understand and manage their feelings through characters they can relate to. This finding aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which explains that learning happens through social interaction. In this case, the teacher acts as the More Knowledgeable Other, helping children learn emotional language and coping strategies. By discussing characters who go through strong emotions, children practice emotional regulation within their Zone of Proximal Development. The stories also expand children's emotional vocabulary and self-awareness skills that Denham et al. (2003) identified as foundational for developing emotional competence and effective emotion regulation in early childhood.

I also used attachment theory to interpret my findings. Just like a secure base, storytime offers a predictable and comforting space where children feel emotionally safe. The positive teacher-child relationship during storytime acts as a secure base, which allows children to express emotions without fear. This reflects Bowlby's idea that securely attached children are more likely to regulate emotions calmly. In my data, one child only spoke about his sadness over being separated from a parent after hearing a related story (Teacher 5). This suggests that the story provided a sense of security, making emotional expression possible.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory also helped me understand the multiple layers of influence. At the microsystem level (teacher-child interaction),

storytime shapes children's daily emotional habits. At the mesosystem level, schools and families often share stories, creating consistency between home and school. At the macrosystem level, Saudi cultural values such as respect, generosity, and religion are often reflected in the stories. For instance, one teacher shared a Ramadan story that encouraged cooperation. In this way, storytime becomes a "proximal process" shaped by larger systems like culture and education, which in turn help develop emotional skills.

My findings align with earlier research. Sala et al. (2014) found that using picture books about emotions helped preschoolers improve their emotional regulation. I observed similar practices teachers used picture books to help children understand that emotions like anger are normal. Denham et al. (2012) highlighted the role of teachers in socializing emotions. Likewise, the teachers I interviewed said storytime helps children "reflect on their emotions and learn how to manage them" (Teacher 2). Harper (2016) also explained that children gain empathy and insight by identifying with story characters. I found the same teachers noticed that when children connect with characters' feelings, they develop healthy emotional responses.

In summary, I developed a grounded theory that storytime serves as a relational scaffold. It supports emotional, social, and cognitive learning in a nurturing classroom environment. This theory extends ideas from Vygotsky and attachment theory, offering a deeper understanding of how emotional development happens through storytime

Promoting Positive Behaviors and Moral Values

The second major finding of this study is that teachers intentionally use stories to support positive behavior and social values. Through thematic analysis, I found that teachers often select or adapt stories to highlight important concepts such as honesty,

cooperation, patience, and ethical decision making. For instance, Teacher 4 explained, “Through stories I can correct children’s behaviors and teach values in a simple and convincing way,” clearly illustrating how storytelling serves as a tool for behavior modeling. In a more interactive approach, Teacher 4 described how she used a puppet to reenact a conflict and asked, “How does the hurt puppet feel?” gently encouraging empathy in the child involved.

Stories about sharing, respecting elders, or waiting for one’s turn were commonly used to reinforce values like honesty and cooperation. In one example, Teacher 5 shared that after telling a story about helping during Ramadan, children began volunteering to help at home. These examples show that storytime functioned as a dynamic space for moral learning, where children could explore social behaviors in a safe, supportive environment.

This theme strongly aligns with Erikson’s theory of socioemotional development, particularly the stage of initiative versus guilt. During this period, preschoolers begin taking initiative in social interactions but need structured support to understand appropriate behaviors. When teachers use stories involving moral dilemmas such as lying, sibling rivalry, or selfishness children experience these challenges indirectly and practice resolving them. This helps them feel successful and confident in their social roles. For example, Teacher 4 told a story about managing anger, and a child who identified with the character learned to regulate his own emotions. This supports Erikson’s view that successfully resolving social tasks helps form a stable identity.

Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory also deepens the interpretation of this finding. Storytime discussions offer a shared social space where teachers scaffold moral

reasoning. For instance, Teacher 2 described how she encourages children to reflect on emotions through storytelling. When teachers ask questions like, “Was it right when the fox took the cake?” they support children’s moral development by prompting critical thinking about right and wrong. This reflects Bartan’s (2020) recommendation for guided moral discussion as a key component of moral education. Within the mesosystem, as described by Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, children also learn from peer interactions during shared story discussions—adding social reinforcement to moral lessons.

My findings are consistent with previous research. Denham et al. (2003) emphasized conflict resolution as key to emotional competence. Likewise, teachers in my study used stories based on real classroom incidents to help children navigate social tensions. Humphries et al. (2018) showed that social stories enhance young children's ability to manage conflicts, which mirrors what I observed. Ornaghi et al. (2016) demonstrated that emotional knowledge training improves prosocial behavior; similarly, teachers reported that storytime led to increased kindness and cooperation.

Finally, my grounded theory emphasizes that moral storytime is culturally embedded. Teachers often incorporated local values and traditions, such as generosity during Ramadan and respect for parents, into their stories. These practices reflect the macrosystem in Bronfenbrenner’s theory, where broader cultural and religious contexts shape a child’s emotional and moral development. Thus, storytime operates as a culturally responsive strategy for promoting prosocial behavior and emotional regulation in early childhood.

Cognitive, Language, and Social Skill Development

The third major theme that emerged in Chapter Four was that storytime plays a role in supporting children's cognitive, language, and social development. Teachers consistently explained that stories help make abstract ideas easier to understand, expand vocabulary, and engage children who are usually shy or distracted. For example, Teacher 2 stated, I use storytime mid lesson, especially in science, because some concepts are intangible, highlighting how narrative is used to simplify complex content. Digital stories, such as transforming children's drawings into animated videos, was also mentioned as a highly engaging method that encouraged language use and participation.

These insights suggest that storytime acts as a scaffold for learning: it strengthens attention, imagination, listening skills, and peer interaction. This finding supports Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, particularly his idea that language is the primary tool for cognitive development. When children encounter new words in stories and later use them in conversation, they internalize vocabulary related to emotions, objects, and social roles. Denham et al. (2003) argued that the ability to name emotions is a key first step in emotional self-regulation. The teachers in this study supported this view many reported that children who gained expressive language during storytime became better at communicating and managing their emotions.

This theme is also reinforced by the work of Bartan (2020) and Betawi (2014), who found that storytelling improves vocabulary and comprehension when stories are developmentally appropriate. In my data, teachers made deliberate decisions about which books to use and often simplified stories to meet their students' language levels.

Storytime also enhanced social development. Teachers described how stories sparked classroom discussions, encouraged children to take turns, and prompted them to consider multiple perspectives. Watching story characters interact helps children learn cooperation and empathy. These observations align with Denham et al. (2012), who emphasized teachers' roles in fostering emotional competence. In this study, teachers used story illustrations to help children interpret social cues like facial expressions, supporting findings by Ornaghi et al. (2016) that emotional education through stories enhances prosocial behavior.

Cognitive benefits were also consistently reported. Teachers noted that even the most distracted children became focused during storytime and absorbed academic content more effectively. This supports Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding, where learning occurs through guided support. Overall, the findings suggest that Saudi early childhood teachers view storytime not just as an enjoyable activity, but as a foundational teaching strategy. It fosters vocabulary, comprehension (Betawi, 2014), emotional understanding, and social growth echoing the findings of Sala et al. (2014), who demonstrated that story-based activities enhance both emotional and cognitive development.

Intentional and Contextualized Story Selection

The fourth theme I identified was that teachers do not select stories randomly. Instead, they described a highly intentional and context-sensitive approach to story selection. Teachers told me that they consider children's emotional needs, classroom situations, and curricular goals when choosing or even creating stories. For example, Teacher 2 explained, "The most important things I consider are the children's needs and the values I want to instill. I also make sure the story encourages them to reflect on their

emotions and learn how to manage them.” She also selects stories based on real-time classroom situations and sometimes creates or adapts stories on the spot”.

Teacher 3 emphasized using stories to support emotional transitions, especially during the beginning of the school year, and aligning storytime with curriculum themes. Teacher 4 chooses stories that reflect developmental goals, age appropriateness, engagement, and specific classroom incidents such as anger or cooperation. Teacher 5, reported using indirect storytime to correct behavior: “If a child behaves inappropriately, I choose a story that addresses the issue without directly confronting the child.” Teacher 6 mentioned using finger puppets and dolls for delivery, and emphasized that story content should reflect classroom conversations and situations. Teacher 7 shared how she chooses emotionally and culturally relevant stories, especially when children ask deep or sensitive questions like death or to reflect religious and cultural events. From a grounded theory perspective, I found that story selection based on emotional needs and values emerged as a selective code that connects teachers’ instructional goals to their narrative choices.

This intentional strategy fits closely with Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, which emphasizes relevance and scaffolding. By selecting stories that reflect the child’s current needs and developmental stage, teachers ensure that the content stays within the child’s Zone of Proximal Development. Bartan (2020) noted that choosing books based on children’s interests and abilities enhances both engagement and learning. Similarly, Sala et al. (2014) found that picture books with familiar and relevant themes help young children regulate emotions. I found the same to be true in Saudi classrooms teachers often selected stories that aligned with both developmental goals and cultural expectations,

such as integrating Islamic values and social norms into their storytelling. In doing so, they used storytime as a culturally grounded tool for emotional and social development. From an ecological perspective, this theme shows how multiple systems interact in shaping storytime. At the microsystem level, I observed teachers adapting stories to each child's emotional state or to the moral lessons needed in the moment. At the exosystem level, curricular guidelines often introduced themes such as kindness or cooperation, but teachers still had the freedom to select or tailor stories that resonated with their students. Bronfenbrenner's theory helps explain this layered interaction. Teacher 5, for example, shared that she used stories about cooperation during Ramadan, combining classroom events with broader cultural traditions. This reflects both the mesosystem (linking classroom and home practices) and the macrosystem (wider societal and religious values).

In short, story selection was not passive, but rather a responsive process in which teacher expertise, shaped by cultural context and curriculum, met the real-time needs of children to shape meaningful learning experiences.

Barriers to Integrating Storytime in the Curriculum

While teachers greatly value storytime, they candidly reported several practical barriers that hinder its consistent use. A rigid, content-heavy curriculum and tight classroom schedules often constrain storytelling opportunities. Teacher 2 noted, "The curriculum somewhat restricts the freedom to use stories... Sometimes a class period is too short for me to use storytelling in a meaningful way" . Teacher 4 echoed this challenge, explaining that it is "hard to fit storytime meaningfully in all content areas" , often leading teachers to skip storytime during busy days. Even digital tools, intended to

enrich storytelling, can occasionally backfire: Teacher 3 shared that internet glitches caused children to lose interest during digital story sessions.

These findings align with broader social-emotional learning (SEL) research, which identifies time constraints and curriculum demands as major barriers to effective implementation (Taylor et al., 2017). In the Saudi context, these challenges are particularly pronounced due to rigid curricular structures and limited systemic support for emotional learning. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, these barriers emerge primarily from the exosystem (educational policies and institutional standards) and the macrosystem (societal emphasis on academic performance over social-emotional development). Although storytime aligns well with SEL goals, it is often not explicitly included in the national curriculum, leaving teachers to incorporate it informally and creatively.

Teachers in this study demonstrated numerous adaptive strategies. Some shortened stories, others integrated them into existing concepts in science or language arts, and several paused traditional instruction altogether to deliver emotionally relevant stories (Teacher 1, 2, 4, 7). Still, these solutions have limitations. Teacher 6 explained that official "read-aloud" periods are often too rigid and "lack expression," causing boredom among children. This illustrates a persistent tension between policy design and classroom practice.

Despite such constraints, the teachers displayed remarkable improvisational skill. Many prioritized emotional learning over rigid time allocations, using tools like puppets, drawings, or real-life incidents to create meaningful storytelling experiences. Their flexibility mirrors the grounded theory concept of action/interaction strategies, in which

participants adapt their behaviors to navigate contextual obstacles. While such grassroots strategies are often overlooked in existing SEL literature, our findings highlight how early childhood educators sustain emotionally rich instruction despite structural challenges.

Policy reforms and professional development could help ease these constraints. For instance, embedding storytime explicitly within preschool learning standards (mesosystem), offering training on time management and curricular integration, and recognizing the broad cognitive, emotional, and social value of storytime could provide much-needed systemic support. As Teacher emphasized that, when storytime becomes a consistent part of the daily routine, “it’s less likely to be skipped.”

Influence of Teacher Experience and Improvisation

The final theme I identified highlights how teacher expertise plays a major role in shaping storytime practices. Experienced teachers described having a “mental library” of stories they can easily draw from (Teacher 1,2,3). They told me that they often choose or even create stories spontaneously to suit teachable moments. As one teacher put it, “Sometimes, I decide on the spot which story best fits the situation” (Teacher 2). One teacher shared that they adjust stories based on children’s reactions or even turn children’s drawings into digital stories on the spot (Teacher 3). These examples demonstrate a high level of professional judgment and flexibility, an aspect of storytime that has not been widely explored in previous studies.

From a Vygotskian perspective, I see these experienced teachers as clear examples of the “More Knowledgeable Other.” They are able to read the classroom environment, sense emotional dynamics, and adapt stories in real-time to meet children’s

needs effectively supporting learning within each child's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In contrast, I found that less experienced teachers tend to rely more on formal curricula or pre-written materials. My findings suggest that teaching experience enhances the scaffolding process, making storytime more responsive and effective. This supports Denham et al. (2012), who described teachers as emotional socializers. Here, I expand on that idea by showing how emotional guidance is delivered through a well-developed narrative repertoire and adaptive storytelling techniques.

Erikson's psychosocial theory also helps explain this theme. Teachers, as adults, continue to develop their own identities, and experienced teachers have often already navigated their own emotional and professional challenges. This maturity makes them more confident when helping children handle emotional situations through storytime.

Despite these strengths, not all teachers found storytime easy to integrate with official curriculum requirements. One teacher shared that the scheduled "read-aloud" time at her school was poorly placed at the end of the day and lacked opportunities for interaction. This shows that while experience can empower teachers to use storytime effectively, structural or institutional constraints can still limit its full potential, regardless of teacher skill level.

In summary, this theme adds to previous research by emphasizing the active role of the teacher in shaping the effectiveness of storytime. Any grounded theory about storytelling in early childhood education must consider teacher factors such as experience, creativity, and training. Based on my findings, I believe that professional development opportunities focusing on storytelling and improvisation ,especially for

novice teachers, could significantly enhance the benefits of storytime for children's learning and emotional growth.

Theoretical Integration and Grounded Theory Model

In this study, Grounded Theory refers to the analytic methodology I used to code, categorize, and interpret the data. Through this process, an emerging grounded theory model was developed, which I term the Scaffolded Emotional-Moral Experience Model.

Several theoretical frameworks intersect to help explain my findings:

- Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory: I observed that storytime operates primarily within the child's microsystem—the classroom—where teachers use stories to directly support emotional growth. However, these interactions are influenced by broader systems. For example, the mesosystem includes home-school connections, such as teachers drawing from familiar family narratives. The exosystem includes curriculum guidelines and school policies that either support or restrict the use of storytime. At the macrosystem level, cultural values (e.g. stories tied to Ramadan or community values) shape the themes teachers choose. Over time, the chronosystem comes into play, as changes in educational priorities can influence how storytime is implemented or valued. My findings show that these systems are interconnected: proximal processes like reading and discussion are shaped by and also influence more distant forces like cultural expectations and curriculum standards.

Bronfenbrenner's model helped me understand both the immediate power of storytime and the external constraints it may face.

- Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory: This theory was particularly relevant across many of my data points. I found that teachers used stories as cultural and educational tools, embedding social norms and emotional concepts into their narratives. They often chose stories that were just slightly above the child's independent level and used discussion to guide comprehension and reflection thus operating within the child's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). For instance, when a teacher turned a child's drawing into a spontaneous story, she was providing meaningful scaffolding that enabled learning the child couldn't achieve alone. I saw story characters functioning as symbolic More Knowledgeable Others, offering models of emotional regulation and social behavior. Through these dialogic interactions, children internalized language, emotional vocabulary, and coping strategies. I view storytime as a powerful socio-cognitive space where shared meaning is developed, which directly reflects Vygotsky's belief that social interaction is essential for learning complex psychological skills.

Comparison to Previous Research

Overall, the findings confirm and enrich existing literature on storytime and socioemotional learning. I found strong parallels with prior studies:

- Denham and colleagues: Denham et al. (2003, 2012) emphasize teachers as socializers of emotion, the link between self-awareness and regulation, and the role of language. The teachers likewise acted as guided socializers, using story-based interactions to foster self-regulation. The "emotional vocabulary" growth I

observed echoes Denham's claim that rich language exposure underpins emotional competence.

- Bartan (2020): Bartan reported that teachers use diverse storytelling methods (books, cards, digital media) and stress relatable content. I saw these methods in practice – from picture books to puppets to on-the-spot digital stories. Bartan's notion that engaging storytelling requires teacher prompting (asking questions) was also evident: only teachers who debriefed stories saw lasting impact on behavior, supporting his findings. The study extends Bartan by showing that teacher experience influences their method choice (novices may stick to book reading, veterans may improvise).
- Betawi (2014): Betawi found storytime improves toddlers' social and emotional skills and language. Our data confirm that even for slightly older preschoolers, storytelling is tightly linked to language acquisition and socioemotional growth. I directly observed teachers enriching vocabulary and using stories to teach emotion terms, in line with Betawi's results.
- Harper (2016): Harper emphasizes empathy and emotional literacy through picture books. Teachers in our study reported children "tapping into" characters' feelings (Harper's phrase) and explicitly worked on empathy via stories. This supports Harper's idea that affective storytelling creates an emotional connection important for self-understanding.
- Sala et al. (2014): This study concluded that picture-book reading is an effective emotion regulation strategy. I noticed Saudi teachers using picture books in

precisely this way. Sala's finding that relatable story scenarios help preschoolers manage feelings is borne out by our teachers' careful context-driven choices.

- Tillott et al. (2024): Their study *Self-regulation through storytelling* used the book *Game On* to help young children build self-regulation skills. The results showed that storytelling improved children's ability to recognize and manage emotions. Stories provided a safe, reflective space for learning emotional strategies, which aligns with how Saudi teachers in this study used storytime to promote empathy, regulation, and cooperation.

Where this study expands on prior work is in the cultural and professional context. Few earlier studies focused on *Saudi* classrooms, where religious and social norms infuse storytelling. The participants integrated cultural practices (e.g. Ramadan themes, see Table 4.8) more explicitly than in Western samples, reflecting the macrosystem's unique role. Additionally, the strong theme of teacher improvisation and experience is a novel contribution: while Denham et al. (2012) noted individual differences among teachers, our grounded theory clarifies *how* experience manifests in practice (building a "mental library" of narratives). Finally, the emphasis on barriers and adaptive strategies provides valuable practical insight, particularly in a context that is often underreported in the literature. This study details the specific curriculum constraints faced by Saudi early childhood teachers and identifies key areas where systemic improvements are needed to better integrate storytime into daily classroom practices.

In summary, the grounded theory emerging from this study weaves together the micro-level practices of storytime with macro-level influences of culture and policy. It confirms that storytime is a multifaceted tool for emotional learning (as denoted by

Denham, Sala, Bartan, etc.) but also illuminates the teacher's agency and contextual factors that shape its use. By situating storytime within Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework and Vygotsky's sociocultural lens, I see that children's emotional regulation emerges from a complex, socially embedded process which Saudi teachers in the study navigate with creativity, cultural knowledge, and care.

Integration of Quantitative Findings

Although this study was primarily qualitative, the quantitative findings from the pre-survey provide important contextual support for the interview results. Survey data showed that a large proportion of teachers reported using storytime for emotional purposes, and bivariate analyses indicated no significant differences based on age, education level, or years of experience. These findings align with the qualitative results, which suggest that emotion-focused use of storytime is a shared pedagogical practice across early childhood teachers, rather than one shaped by individual demographic characteristics.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the qualitative sample was limited to seven teachers who voluntarily agreed to participate in interviews, which may restrict the transferability of the findings to other early childhood contexts. In addition, interview participants were purposefully selected based on their self-reported use of storytime to support children's emotional regulation. While this criterion was aligned with the study's qualitative aims, it may have resulted in a sample inclined toward positive perceptions of storytime as an emotion regulation practice.

Future Research

Future research could expand this work by including a larger and more diverse sample of teachers across multiple regions in Saudi Arabia. Studies that incorporate classroom observations or child outcome measures could provide further insight into how storytime practices influence children's emotional regulation in practice. Additionally, future research might examine professional development programs that support teachers in intentionally using storytime as an emotion regulation tool, as well as explore parents' perspectives on emotional storytelling in home contexts

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APPENDIX A

CHILDREN'S STORIES USED IN STORYTIME CODING

Appendix A-1: Calm Down, Talal

It was a bright morning in the virtual kindergarten. Talal was excited as he logged in to his class. Today, the teacher had planned a fun storytelling session. However, as the session started, Talal found himself feeling restless.

The teacher, Miss Amina, began telling a story about a little bird who learned patience.

But Talal kept interrupting. "Miss Amina, I already know this story!" he exclaimed.

Miss Amina smiled gently and said, "That's wonderful, Talal! But let's listen together and see if we notice something new."

Talal crossed his arms. He didn't like waiting. He wanted to move on to the games right away.

His friend, Laila, whispered in the chat, "Talal, be patient! The story is fun."

But Talal sighed loudly and said, "This is boring!"

Miss Amina noticed Talal's frustration and decided to pause. "Class, let's all take a deep breath together. Inhale... and exhale..."

Everyone followed. Talal hesitated but then joined in. He felt a little calmer.

Then, Miss Amina asked, "Talal, can you tell us what you liked most about the bird in the story?"

Talal thought for a moment and said, "Well... the bird learned to wait before flying."

Miss Amina nodded. "That's right! Just like we sometimes have to wait for fun things. But when we do, we enjoy them even more."

Talal smiled. "I guess waiting isn't so bad."

By the end of the class, Talal felt much better. He realized that patience made things more enjoyable, and he even thanked Miss Amina for the story.

The whole class cheered, and Talal had learned an important lesson: sometimes, all we need to do is take a deep breath and wait.

Appendix A-2: Don't Touch Me - Hind Al-Khalifa

I like my mother's tender touches..

I like to play with my father..

I like to shake hands with my friends..

I like to kiss my brother.

I don't sit on the lap of a stranger.

I don't allow anyone to touch my private parts even if they are relatives.

I reject harassment.

I am responsible for my body. I will protect myself.

Appendix A-3: The Secrets of Friendship

In one of the seas, there lived a beautiful fish with colorful scales in shades of blue, green, purple, and silver.

All the fish admired her beautiful scales and called her 'Rainbow Fish'. They wanted to play with her, but she ignored them and swam away proudly, showing off her shiny scales.

One day, a little blue fish came to her and said, 'Rainbow Fish, wait for me and give me one of your shiny scales. You have so many.'

But Rainbow Fish refused and said, 'You want me to give you my scales? That's not possible!'

The little blue fish swam away sadly and told all the other fish what had happened.

Everyone was upset with Rainbow Fish and stayed away from her. She swam alone and no one talked to her or admired her scales.

One day, Rainbow Fish complained to the starfish, saying, 'I am beautiful, but no one loves me.'

The starfish replied, 'I can't help you, but you can go to the wise octopus who lives in a deep cave behind the coral reef.'

Rainbow Fish searched for the wise octopus and found a dark cave where she could not see anything.

Two glowing eyes appeared in the dark, and the octopus emerged, saying, 'I've been expecting you. The waves told me your story. My advice: give each fish one of your shiny scales.'

'This means you won't be the most beautiful fish in the sea, but you will feel happiness.'

Rainbow Fish said, 'I can't...' but before she could finish, the octopus disappeared into the dark cave.

Rainbow Fish thought to herself: 'Should I give up my beautiful scales? I can't. How can I be happy without them?'

She felt a gentle touch from a fin — the little blue fish had returned and said, 'Rainbow Fish, please don't be upset. I would like one of your scales.'

Rainbow Fish thought and said, 'I guess giving up one of my beautiful scales won't hurt me or take away my beauty.'

So she pulled out one of her scales and gave it to the little blue fish, who was overjoyed.

The blue fish began to swim and play, creating lots of bubbles.

Rainbow Fish felt happy as she watched her swim.

The blue fish went to tell the others what happened, and soon all the fish gathered around Rainbow Fish.

Each fish asked for a scale, and Rainbow Fish started sharing her scales left and right.

The more she gave, the happier she felt.

Until only one scale was left with her — but she was at the peak of happiness.

The fish asked her to play with them, and she replied, 'With pleasure!'

Then she began playing with them, and joy filled her heart.

Appendix A-4: Little Red Riding Hood

Little Red Riding Hood lived with her mother near the forest. One morning, her mother prepared a small basket and said gently,

“Be careful, my dear, of the wolf.”

Her mother’s voice carried worry and protection as she warned her.

Little Red Riding Hood began her walk through the forest. Suddenly, a tall, grey wolf appeared in front of her. His sharp eyes stared at her, and she felt her heart tremble.

The wolf asked, “What is your name, little girl?”

Scared and unsure, she answered quietly,
“My name is Little Red Riding Hood.”

The wolf smiled an evil smile, hiding his true intentions.

Inside his mind he whispered,
“Haha! Now I can reach Grandma’s house before her!”

The wolf rushed ahead, reached Grandma’s cottage, and tricked her. He locked her inside the closet and warned her not to make a sound. Grandma, frightened, obeyed him.

When Little Red Riding Hood arrived, she noticed something strange about “Grandma.”

She stepped closer and asked,
“Grandma, why are your eyes so big?”

Suspicion rose inside her as she stared at the wolf disguised in the bed.

The wolf suddenly shouted,
“To eat you with!”

His loud voice filled the room with danger.

Terrified, Little Red Riding Hood ran toward the door and screamed,
“Help! Help!”

A hunter who was walking nearby heard her desperate cries. He quickly rushed into the house, opened the door, and saved Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother.

She felt deep relief as she hugged her grandmother tightly.

Appendix A-5: Unnamed Story by Teacher 1

“The child hits others, so I use dolls to act it out. For example, I show one doll hitting another. Then I start a discussion with them: ‘What do you think about this behavior?’

I explain that the second friend becomes sad.

I ask them: ‘How do we handle our feelings? How does he feel?’

And I notice that the child who was hitting begins to sit quietly and respond. It feels like he starts to understand and feel the other child’s emotions.”

APPENDIX B

PRE-SURVEY

Pre-Survey for Teacher Recruitment for Study on Exploring Saudi Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Storytime on Children's Emotion Regulation

Dear Early Childhood Educator,

My name is Reem Assiri, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Early Childhood Education Program at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. I am currently conducting a research study on exploring Saudi teachers' perceptions of the role of storytime on children's emotion regulation. I would greatly appreciate your participation in this survey, as your insights and experiences as an educator are invaluable to my research.

This brief survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used solely for academic purposes.

Purpose: This questionnaire aims to gather information about how you incorporate storytime into your teaching. Your feedback will help identify teachers for potential participation in a follow-up study.

Instructions: Please take a few moments to answer the following questions. Your responses will be kept confidential and will contribute to important research in early childhood education.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Age:
 - 21-30
 - 31-40
 - 41-50
 - 51+
2. Highest level of education completed:
 - Bachelor's Degree or less
 - Master's Degree
 - Doctorate
 - Other (please specify): _____
3. Years of teaching experience:
 - 0-5 years or less
 - 6-10 years

- 11-15 years
- 16+ years

Section 2: Teaching Experience

- Grade level(s) currently teaching (check all that apply):
 - Preschool (3-4 years)
 - Pre-K (4-5 years)
 - Kindergarten (5-6 years)
- Do you incorporate storytime into your class?
 - Yes
 - No
- How frequently do you incorporate storytime (a structured period in class in which a story is either read from a book or told aloud to children) into your class?
 - Daily
 - 2-3 times per week
 - Weekly
 - Less than once a week
 - Rarely

Section 3: Focus on Emotional Growth and Self-Regulation

- Do you specifically use stories to help children with emotion regulation (the ability to recognize, understand, accept, and manage their emotions effectively)?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Sometimes (please explain): _____

Section 4: Interest in Participation

- Would you be interested in participating in a study about the role of storytime in children's emotion regulation? The interview will take approximately one hour.
 - Yes
 - No
 - Maybe (please explain): _____
- If you answered “Yes” or “Maybe,” please provide your email below so that we can contact you to schedule the interview:
 - Email: _____

Thank you for your time.

If you have any questions about this questionnaire or the study, please contact:

Reem Assiri
Ph.D. Student, Oakland University
Assiri@oakland.edu

For additional information, you may also contact my advisor:

Dr. Julie Ricks-Doneen
Associate Professor, Oakland University
ricksdon@oakland.edu

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- **Story Time and Emotional Regulation**

1. Describe Storytime in your classroom. How do you use Storytime in your classroom? (Follow-up: What are the different purposes Storytime serves in your classroom?)
2. How does the curriculum influence the way you implement storytime in your classroom?
3. How do you or other teachers decide to use stories to discuss emotional topics or ideas in class? (Follow-up: What factors do you consider when selecting stories that focus on emotional development?)
4. How do you perceive the role of storytime in supporting emotion regulation in preschoolers? please share a specific example of how storytime has influenced a child's emotion regulation development?

- **Strategies and stories**

1. What strategies do you find effective in helping children learn to regulate their emotions through stories? (Follow-up: please give examples of strategies you find effective?)
2. How do you integrate storytime into your teaching to help children develop emotion regulation skills?
3. Are there specific criteria you use when selecting stories for emotion regulation? If so, what are they?
4. How do you track children's emotional growth in relation to storytime activities?

- **Challenges and Opportunities**

1. How have your experiences and training influenced your approach to using storytime for emotional regulation?

2. What challenges do you encounter when trying to integrate storytime for emotion regulation into your curriculum?
 3. What are some of the opportunities you see for using storytime to support children's emotional development?
 4. What would you like to share about how storytime influences young children's emotional development?
- **Name stories:**
 1. Please name a specific book or story that you use during storytime?
 2. Follow-up: Why did you choose this book for your classroom? What emotional or developmental themes does this story address?

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN EXEMPT RESEARCH

"Exploring Saudi Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Storytime on Children's Emotion Regulation"

Introduction:

My name is Reem Assiri, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in Early Childhood Education at Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan, USA. I am conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Julie Ricks-Doneen at Oakland University. This research seeks to gain insights into how preschool, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten teachers use storytime to support the emotional regulation of young children.

You are being asked to participate in the study because you are an early childhood teacher with at least one year of experience who uses storytime to teach emotional regulation.

Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary. You can choose to stop your participation at any time or skip any part of the study if you are not comfortable. Your decision will not affect your present or future relationship with Oakland University, the researcher, or your school.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a brief (5-minute) pre-survey about your use of storytime in the classroom. Based on your responses, you may be selected to participate in a 60-minute semi-structured interview. The interview will be conducted in person or via an online platform (e.g., Zoom) at a time convenient for you. During the interview, you will be asked to share your insights, experiences, and strategies related to using storytime for emotion regulation.

Please indicate your preference for interview recording by selecting one of the options below:

- ☐ I consent to the interview being audio-recorded for transcription purposes.
- ☐ I prefer to participate in the interview without audio recording.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw at any time without any penalty or consequences. If you want to stop participating in the survey, close your browser before completing and submitting it. If the survey is submitted, it may not be possible to withdraw your data from the study. If you want to stop participating in the interview, you can inform the researcher. You are not obligated to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Confidentiality:

Your responses will be kept confidential. No identifying information, such as your name or school, will be shared in any reports or publications resulting from this study. You will be assigned a pseudonym, and any personal identifiers will be removed from the data. All data will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the information.

Risks:

The potential risks associated with participating in this study are minimal. There may be a risk that someone who is not part of this research may accidentally see your personal information. We will try to make sure that this does not happen by keeping your research records as confidential as possible.

Benefits:

There may not be a direct benefit to you, but by reflecting on your teaching practices, you may be contributing to research that could inform professional development and improve the use of storytime to support children's emotional growth.

Duration of Participation:

The pre-survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete, and the interview (if selected) will last about 60 minutes.

Compensation:

You will not receive compensation for participating in this study.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions about the study or your participation, please contact:

Reem Assiri at Assiri@oakland.edu

Dr. Julie Ricks-Doneen at ricksdon@oakland.edu

For any concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Oakland University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 248-370-4898 or email Dr. Judette Haddad, IRB Manager, at haddad@oakland.edu.

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL

Date: 1-8-2025

IRB #: IRB-FY2025-147

Title: Exploring Saudi Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Storytime on Children's Emotion Regulation

Creation Date: 10-10-2024

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Reem Assiri

Review Board: OU IRB

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	Exempt
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Key Study Contacts

Member	Julie Ricks-Donnen	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	ricksdon@oakland.edu
Member	Reem Assiri	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	assiri@oakland.edu
Member	Reem Assiri	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	assiri@oakland.edu

APPENDIX F

TABLES

Table F1. Selected Quotes Supporting Emotional Regulation

No.	Sub-theme	Quote	Teacher	Core Category (Selective Code)
1	Understanding and Naming Emotions	Storytelling has a significant influence on children. It helps them understand their emotions and learn values in an indirect way.	Teacher 2	Emotional Awareness Development
2	Enhancing Emotional Expression	I use stories to help children express their emotions and communicate properly with each other.	Teacher 4	Emotional Communication Scaffolding
3	Age-Appropriate Story Selection	I choose stories that align with the developmental goals I have set beforehand.	Teacher 4	Developmentally Appropriate Framing
4	Emotion-Focused Stories	The story encourages them to reflect on their emotions and learn how to manage them.	Teacher 2	Guided Emotional Reflection
5	Emotion-Focused Stories	He began to relate to the character in the story and learned how to manage his emotions.	Teacher 4	Emotional Identification Through Characters
6	Anger	The story was about how to control anger.	Teacher 4	Anger Management Modeling
7	Promoting Positive Behaviors	I used a story with a child who struggled with anger, and the story was about how to control anger.	Teacher 4	Anger Management Modeling
8	Social Skills Development	Helps children understand their emotions.	Teacher 4	Emotion Understanding Through Narratives
9	Enhancing Emotional Expression	Develop appropriate ways to express and manage them.	Teacher 4	Strategies for Emotional Expression

No.	Sub-theme	Quote	Teacher	Core Category (Selective Code)
10	Emotion-Focused Stories	“When teaching patience, I use a story about waiting”	Teacher 4	Virtue-Specific Story Application
11	Storytime Role	“This routine helps them connect emotionally”	Teacher 1	Routine Emotional Scaffolding
12	Use of Digital Content	“I convert children’s drawings into animated cartoons to help them visualize emotions”	Teacher 3	Visual Emotional Engagement
13	Illustrations	“I use children’s drawings and animate them to help children visualize their emotions more vividly”	Teacher 3	Visual Emotional Engagement
14	Promoting Positive Behaviors	“If a child hits a friend, I immediately narrate a story about managing anger and being kind”	Teacher 3	Behavioral Intervention via Narrative
15	Purposes of Use Storytime	“Every day after the opening activities, I integrate a story that targets emotional reflection”	Teacher 1	Daily Emotional Reflection
16	Interactive Storytelling	“Through digital tools like Pixton, children create their own emotional stories”	Teacher 3	Interactive Digital Emotional Storytelling
17	Calm and Structured Storytime Environment	“Story time is more structured and calm. It helps children gain language skills, emotional experiences, and positive behaviors”	Teacher 5	Safe Space Structuring
18	Promoting Positive Behaviors	“Stories play a big role and have a strong impact. Children gain behaviors, values, and expanded thinking through them”	Teacher 5	Moral Value Reinforcement
19	Emotional Disclosure	“One child was separated from his mother and only opened up emotionally after hearing a story. I wouldn’t have known his situation otherwise”	Teacher 5	Emotion Disclosure Facilitation

No.	Sub-theme	Quote	Teacher	Core Category (Selective Code)
20	Responsive to Classroom Needs	"I sometimes use stories based on specific situations in class. For example, if a child asks a question or something happens, I tell a related story spontaneously"	Teacher 5	Responsive Story Adaptation
21	Emotional Expression	"I ask children to retell the story in their own words, which helps them express their feelings"	Teacher 5	Child-led Emotional Expression
22	Indirect Behavior Guidance	"Story time is held during the final meeting of the day. Sometimes, if a child shows inappropriate behavior, I use a story to guide them indirectly in a way that respects their personality"	Teacher 6	Positive Behavior Guidance
23	Use of Puppets and Visual Aids	"I use dolls, finger puppets, pictures, and small models to explain the story and convey its message"	Teacher 6	Multisensory Emotional Presentation
24	Classroom-Driven Topics	"It depends on what I notice in the classroom or from children's conversations. For example, if they talk about death or similar topics, I choose a relevant story"	Teacher 6	Culturally Responsive Selection
25	Age-Appropriate Story Selection	"The story should be age-appropriate, have simple words, clear illustrations, moderate length, and adaptable events to match the intended goal"	Teacher 6	Linguistic and Emotional Matching
26	Positive Emotional Impact	"It's one of the most effective tools, especially when accompanied by music or a song. Stories with	Teacher 6	Sensory-Enhanced Emotional Engagement

No.	Sub-theme	Quote	Teacher	Core Category (Selective Code)
27	Self-Regulation through Storytime	music make children very happy” “I had a very energetic and aggressive child who began asking for story time himself when he felt tense, as a way to release energy and manage his emotions”	Teacher 6	Self-Regulation Support
28	Movement Integration	“Movement is one of the most effective methods. I combine storytelling with physical activity”	Teacher 6	Kinesthetic Story Integration
29	Behavior Modeling	“I tell two stories one about an organized person and one about a messy person and then we discuss the outcomes and encourage positive behavior”	Teacher 6	Comparative Behavior Modeling
30	Flexible Storytime Use	“Sometimes the children choose the story, or I choose one based on their needs. We use stories to engage them or convey a message. Story time usually ends the class session”	Teacher 7	Flexible and Responsive Use
31	Understanding Emotions	“Very important, especially since some children don’t know the names of emotions. Stories help them recognize feelings through characters like ‘Dad is angry’ or ‘Mom is crying”	Teacher 7	Emotional Vocabulary Building
32	Emotional Expression	“When a story includes emotions, children learn new vocabulary and begin expressing their feelings accurately using those words”	Teacher 7	Emotional Literacy Development
33	Emotionally Responsive	“If a situation calls for emotional discussion, I choose a story that fits	Teacher 7	Emotionally Targeted Intervention

No.	Sub-theme	Quote	Teacher	Core Category (Selective Code)
		— especially for character building”		

Table F2 . Promoting Positive Behaviors and Moral Values through Storytime

No.	Sub-theme	Quote	Teacher	Core Category (Selective Code)
1	Storytime Role	“Through it, I can correct children’s behaviors and teach values in a simple and convincing way.”	Teacher 2	Moral Socialization
2	Storytime Role	“Storytelling helps correct behaviors and reinforce values like honesty and cooperation.”	Teacher 2	Moral Socialization
3	Purpose of Storytime	“I use stories to reinforce values like honesty.”	Teacher 2	Moral Socialization
4	Story Selection	“I used a story about honesty, featuring a child who learned the importance of truthfulness.”	Teacher 2	Moral Socialization
5	Purpose of Storytime	“Promoting values like honesty, cooperation, and patience is part of my routine.”	Teacher 4	Moral Socialization
6	Storytime Strategy	“If a child hits another, I use puppets to reenact the situation and ask, ‘How does the hurt puppet feel?’”	Teacher 1	Empathy Development
7	Cultural Integration	“A story about cooperation during Ramadan encouraged children to help at home.”	Teacher 3	Cultural Socialization
8	Promoting Positive Behaviors	“If a child hits a friend, I immediately narrate a story about managing anger and being kind.”	Teacher 3	Emotional Self-Regulation
9	Promoting Positive Behaviors	“I used a story with a child who struggled with	Teacher 4	Emotional Self-Regulation

No.	Sub-theme	Quote	Teacher	Core Category (Selective Code)
		anger, and the story was about how to control anger.”		
10	Anger Management	“The story was about how to control anger.”	Teacher 4	Emotional Self-Regulation
11	Emotion-Focused Stories	“When teaching patience, I use a story about waiting.”	Teacher 4	Emotional Self-Regulation
12	Emotion-Focused Stories	“He began to relate to the character in the story and learned how to manage his emotions.”	Teacher 4	Emotional Self-Regulation
13	Indirect Behavior Guidance	“Sometimes, if a child shows inappropriate behavior, I use a story to guide them indirectly in a way that respects their personality.”	Teacher 6	Indirect Behavioral Guidance
14	Calm and Structured Storytime	“Story time is more structured and calm. It helps children gain language skills, emotional experiences, and positive behaviors.”	Teacher 5	Structured Learning Environment
15	Promoting Positive Behaviors	“Stories play a big role and have a strong impact. Children gain behaviors, values, and expanded thinking through them.”	Teacher 5	Cognitive & Moral Growth
16	Emotional Understanding	“Storytelling has a significant influence on children. It helps them understand their emotions and learn values in an indirect way.”	Teacher 2	Emotional Literacy
17	Enhancing Emotional Expression	“I use stories to help children express their emotions and communicate properly with each other.”	Teacher 4	Emotional Expression Skills
18	Emotional Identification	“Stories help them recognize feelings through characters like ‘Dad is angry’ or ‘Mom is crying.’”	Teacher 7	Emotional Literacy

No.	Sub-theme	Quote	Teacher	Core Category (Selective Code)
19	Emotional Vocabulary	“When a story includes emotions, children learn new vocabulary and begin expressing their feelings accurately using those words.”	Teacher 7	Emotional Literacy
20	Emotional Expression	“I ask children to retell the story in their own words, which helps them express their feelings.”	Teacher 5	Emotional Expression Skills

Table F3 .Quotes Supporting Cognitive and Linguistic Growth

No.	Sub-theme	Teacher Quote	Teacher	Core Category (Selective Code)
1	Language Enrichment	“I use storytime to improve language skills”	Teacher 4	Language Development
2	Vocabulary Expansion	“I use it to enrich children's vocabulary”	Teacher 4	Language Development
3	Listening Skills	“Storytime helps develop listening and concentration skills”	Teacher 4	Listening and Attention Skills
4	Imaginative Thinking	“I ask children to imagine situations and then create a story around them”	Teacher 2	Creative Thinking
5	Visualization Aids	“I prepare visual aids and scenes to reinforce the message”	Teacher 2	Visual Comprehension Support
6	Academic Integration	“I use stories to support concepts like numbers, letters, or even social skills”	Teacher 4	Academic Concept Integration
7	Comprehension	“Children understand better when I explain through storytelling”	Teacher 2	Cognitive Comprehension Support

No.	Sub-theme	Teacher Quote	Teacher	Core Category (Selective Code)
8	Routine Usage	“There must be a story after the opening activities every day”	Teacher 4	Structured Routine Support
9	Developmental Fit	The story must be appropriate for preschool age.	Teacher 4	Developmental Appropriateness
10	Familiar Characters	“If they love certain characters, I choose stories that feature them”	Teacher 4	Learner-Centered Motivation
11	Attention Building	“Children who struggled with focus sat still during storytime”	Teacher 1	Focused Attention through Storytime
12	Digital Story Creation	“Children created digital stories using Pixton, boosting vocabulary”	Teacher 3	Digital Literacy and Language Enrichment
13	Social Engagement	“If I have a shy child, I ask them to tell the story after reading, helping them engage more”	Teacher 1	Social Confidence Building
14	Prioritizing Storytime	“I feel I am rushing through letter lessons, so I pause and focus on storytelling instead”	Teacher 1	Instructional Prioritization for Engagement
15	Animated Story Motivation	“Children enjoy seeing their own work turned into animated stories, which motivates them and improves language skills”	Teacher 3	Multimodal Language Motivation
16	Visual Learning	“I mostly use picture presentations through a projector... or	Teacher 5	Visual Literacy Support

No.	Sub-theme	Teacher Quote	Teacher	Core Category (Selective Code)
17	Retelling Stories	physical books from the library” “I ask children to retell the story in their own words, which helps them express their feelings”	Teacher 5	Expressive Language Practice
18	Curriculum Connection	“Stories often align with the curriculum and support the topics being taught”	Teacher 5	Curriculum Alignment
19	Music Integration	“It’s one of the most effective tools, especially when accompanied by music or a song”	Teacher 6	Multisensory Engagement
20	Movement Integration	“Movement is one of the most effective methods. I combine storytelling with physical activity”	Teacher 6	Kinesthetic Learning
21	Emotional Vocabulary	“When a story includes emotions, children learn new vocabulary and begin expressing their feelings”	Teacher 7	Emotional Language Acquisition

Table F4 . Quotes Selected Quotes Illustrating Intentional and Contextualized Story Selection

No.	Sub-theme	Teacher Quote	Teacher	Selective Code
1	Choice of stories	“I make up stories and act them out with puppets.”	Teacher 1	Puppet-Based Story Creation
2	Choice of stories	“I choose stories based on classroom situations or needs.”	Teacher 2	Situational Story Selection
3	Choice of stories	“If a certain incident happens and I want to	Teacher 2	Behavior-Focused Story Selection

No.	Sub-theme	Teacher Quote	Teacher	Selective Code
4	Choice of stories	correct a behavior, I use a relevant story.” “Experience plays a major role, and sometimes, I decide on the spot which story best fits the situation.”	Teacher 2	Experience-Based Story Selection
5	Choice of stories	“The most important things I consider are the children's needs and the values I want to instill. I also make sure the story encourages them to reflect on their emotions and learn how to manage them.”	Teacher 2	Needs/Values-Driven Story Selection
6	Choice of stories	“At the beginning of the school year, some children feel shy or anxious about transitioning from home to school. I use stories to comfort them and explain what their daily school routine will be like.”	Teacher 3	Transition-Supporting Story Selection
7	Curriculum-aligned stories	“Some stories align with the unit theme, reinforcing lessons taught earlier in the day in a way that is simplified for children.”	Teacher 3	Unit-Theme Aligned Story Selection
8	Curriculum-aligned stories	“The current curriculum is inquiry-based, meaning we build activities and units based on what children bring up. We set learning objectives and select stories that support these objectives in an engaging way for children.”	Teacher 3	Curriculum Objective-Aligned Story Selection
9	Choice of stories	“I choose stories that align with the developmental goals I have set beforehand.”	Teacher 4	Development Goal-Aligned Story Selection
10	Choice of stories	“If an incident requiring reinforcement of cooperation or anger	Teacher 4	Incident-Triggered Story Selection

No.	Sub-theme	Teacher Quote	Teacher	Selective Code
11	Choice of stories	management occurs, I choose a suitable story.” “The story must be appropriate for the preschool age group.”	Teacher 4	Age-Appropriate Story Selection Engagement-Focused Story Selection
12	Choice of stories	“I make sure the language is simple and the illustrations are engaging. If there are characters they love, I choose stories featuring those characters.”	Teacher 4	
13	Choice of stories	“If a child behaves inappropriately, I choose a story that addresses the issue without directly confronting the child. This allows me to send a message respectfully.”	Teacher 5	Indirect Behavior-Correction Story Selection
14	Choice of stories	“I sometimes use stories at the end of the day to calm children down and help them reflect emotionally.”	Teacher 5	Reflective Closure Story Selection
15	Choice of stories	“I use finger puppets and dolls to present the story. It helps children visualize and stay engaged.”	Teacher 6	Multisensory Story Delivery
16	Choice of stories	“The story must relate to something happening in class, or a topic the children are talking about.”	Teacher 6	Context-Responsive Story Selection
17	Choice of stories	“Sometimes, if a child asks about something like death, I bring in a story that helps explain it gently.”	Teacher 7	Emotionally Sensitive Story Selection
18	Choice of stories	“I choose stories that reflect the cultural or religious events the children experience at home.”	Teacher 7	Culturally-Contextual Story Selection

Table F5 . Quotes on Implementation Challenges with Selective Coding

No.	Sub-theme	Teacher Quote	Teacher	Selective Code
1	Curriculum Constraints	The curriculum somewhat restricts the freedom to use stories.	Teacher 2	Curriculum Rigidity
2	Time Pressure	Sometimes, a class period is too short for me to use storytelling in a meaningful way.	Teacher 2	Time Constraints
3	Subject Limitations	In science, I often need to keep stories short and focused due to time constraints.	Teacher 2	Subject-Specific Adaptation
4	Language-Only Focus	In language arts, I can use storytelling more extensively.	Teacher 2	Uneven Subject Integration
5	Integration Challenges	It's hard to fit storytime meaningfully in all content areas.	Teacher 4	Integration Difficulty
6	Scheduling Conflicts	Most of the time, I make it a fixed part of the daily schedule, but sometimes it's skipped.	Teacher 4	Routine Disruption
7	Curriculum Compliance	I follow a specific curriculum with educational goals and themes throughout the academic year.	Teacher 4	Curriculum Alignment
8	Story Format	The story must be short and directly linked to the lesson goal.	Teacher 2	Story Simplification
9	Practical Adaptation	Stories based on real situations help me integrate learning even if time is tight.	Teacher 4	Context-Based Story Adjustment
10	Subject Fit	I adapt the story's length and topic depending on the subject I'm teaching.	Teacher 2	Subject-Specific Story Tailoring
11	Time vs Storytelling	Sometimes I pause the letter lessons to prioritize storytelling because I find it more effective emotionally, but time constraints make it difficult.	Teacher 1	Trade-off Between Curriculum and Emotion
12	Technical Barriers	Internet issues sometimes disrupt digital storytelling sessions, causing loss of engagement.	Teacher 3	Technology-Related Disruption

Table F6 . Quotes Reflecting Experience and Improvisation

No.	Challenge	Quote	Teacher	Selective Code
1	Curriculum Alignment	“Stories often align with the curriculum and support the topics being taught.”	Teacher 5	Curriculum-Integrated Storytelling
2	Curriculum Constraints	“The curriculum assigns a time for read-aloud sessions, which are different from story time. Read-alouds can be boring for children because they lack expression and interaction.”	Teacher 6	Limitation of Assigned Read-Alouds
3	Time Constraints	“Story time usually ends the class session.”	Teacher 7	End-of-Class Storytime Scheduling
4	Mental Library	“Over time, I have built a ‘mental library’ of stories to correct behaviors and instill values.”	Teacher 2	Experience-Based Story Repository
5	Spontaneous Selection	“Sometimes, I decide on the spot which story best fits the situation.”	Teacher 2	On-the-Spot Story Selection
6	Emotional Adaptation	“I adapt stories based on children’s reactions and emotional state.”	Teacher 4	Emotionally Responsive Storytelling
7	Experience-Based Story Selection	“My experience has helped me choose the right stories quickly.”	Teacher 2	Efficiency Through Experience
8	Reflective Practice	“After each story, I reflect on how it affected the children’s behavior or mood.”	Teacher 4	Post-Story Reflection
9	Emotional Responsiveness	“I don’t rely on scripts; I adjust based on what the children need emotionally at that moment.”	Teacher 2	Adaptive Story Delivery
10	Real-Time Relevance	“Many stories I use come from incidents that happened just before the storytime session.”	Teacher 4	Incident-Inspired Storytelling
11	Cross-Level Experience	“I’ve taught multiple levels, and storytelling always works best in early childhood.”	Teacher 2	Early Childhood Storytelling Effectiveness

No.	Challenge	Quote	Teacher	Selective Code
12	Emotion-Specific Story Design	“Sometimes I design stories to target a particular emotional struggle I see in class.”	Teacher 4	Emotion-Specific Story Creation
13	Natural Story Integration	“The longer I teach, the more natural it becomes to link stories with children’s emotional needs.”	Teacher 2	Story-Emotion Integration Through Experience
14	Personalized Story Writing	“If I can’t find a suitable story, I write one quickly based on what happened in class.”	Teacher 1	Real-Time Story Creation
15	Digital Story Improvisation	“I create animated stories using children’s drawings, sometimes on the spot, to immediately address emotional needs.”	Teacher 3	Visual-Digital Story Adaptation
16	Confidence Building Through Storytelling	“Storytime boosts children’s self-confidence, especially when they see their own work turned into a story.”	Teacher 3	Self-Esteem Enhancement Through Storytelling
17	Emotional Clues	“Sometimes a child’s expression tells me they need a comforting story, and I change my plan instantly.”	Teacher 5	Emotion-Responsive Planning
18	Experience Confidence	“Years of storytelling helped me read the room faster. I can switch stories if I feel the children are disconnected.”	Teacher 6	Real-Time Adjustment Through Experience
19	Flexible Closure	“Storytime at the end of the day lets me improvise. If something happened during the day, I choose a story to match.”	Teacher 7	Storytime as Reflective Closure